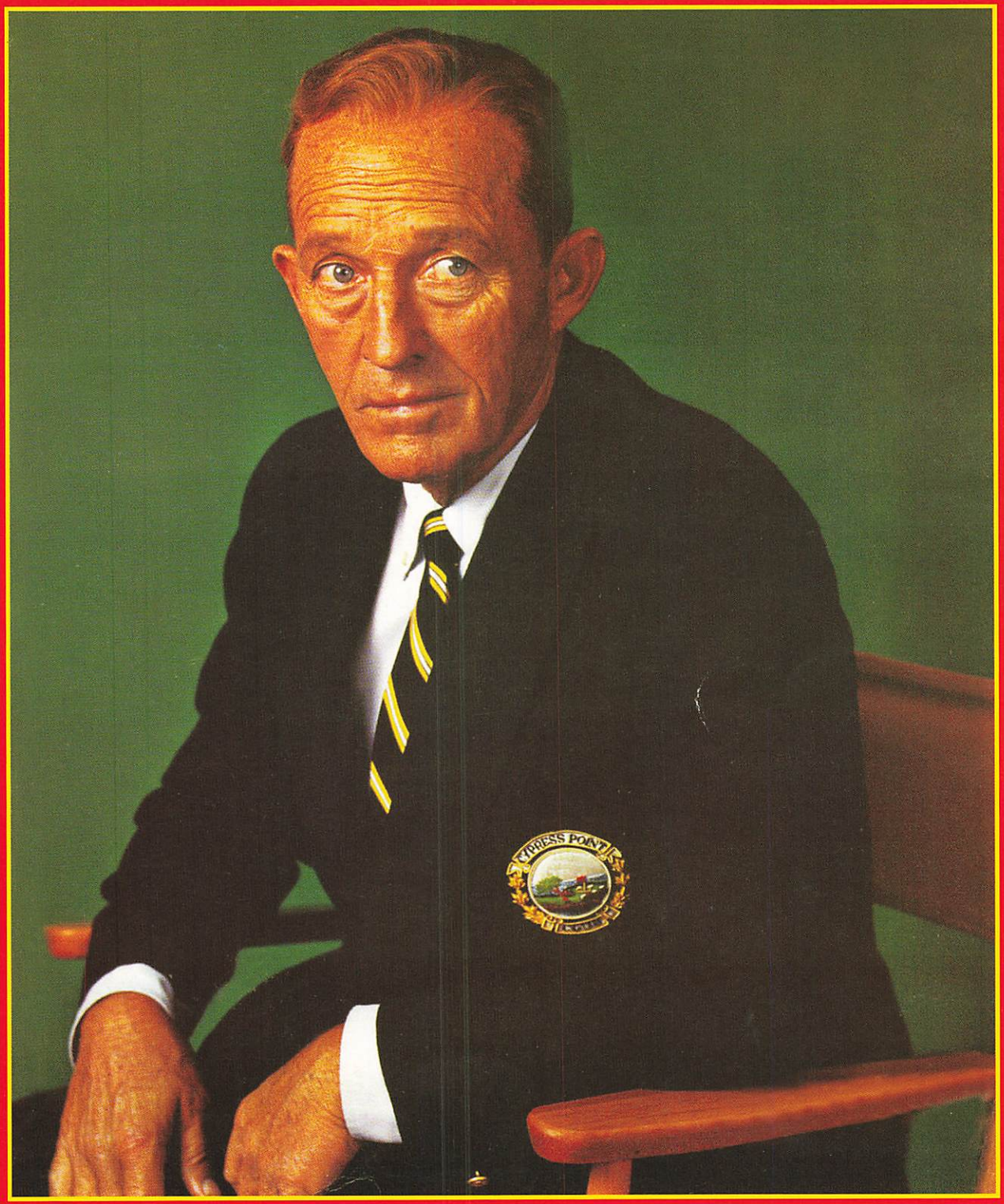
BING

Winter
2010

No. 156



THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

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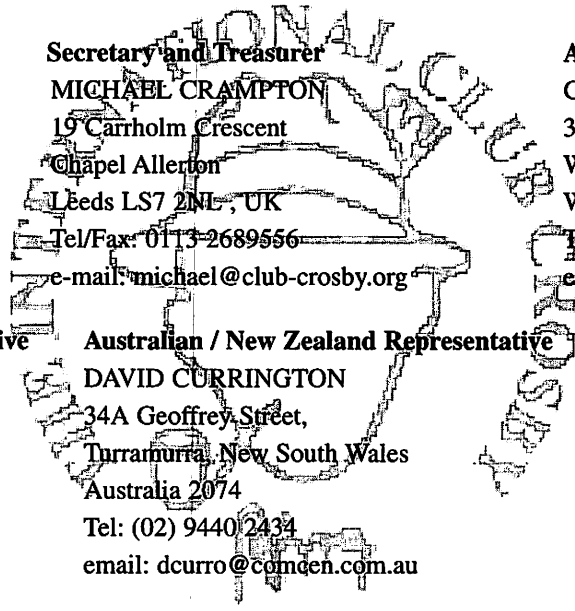

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All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::
(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICC. All original material © Copyright ICC 2010.

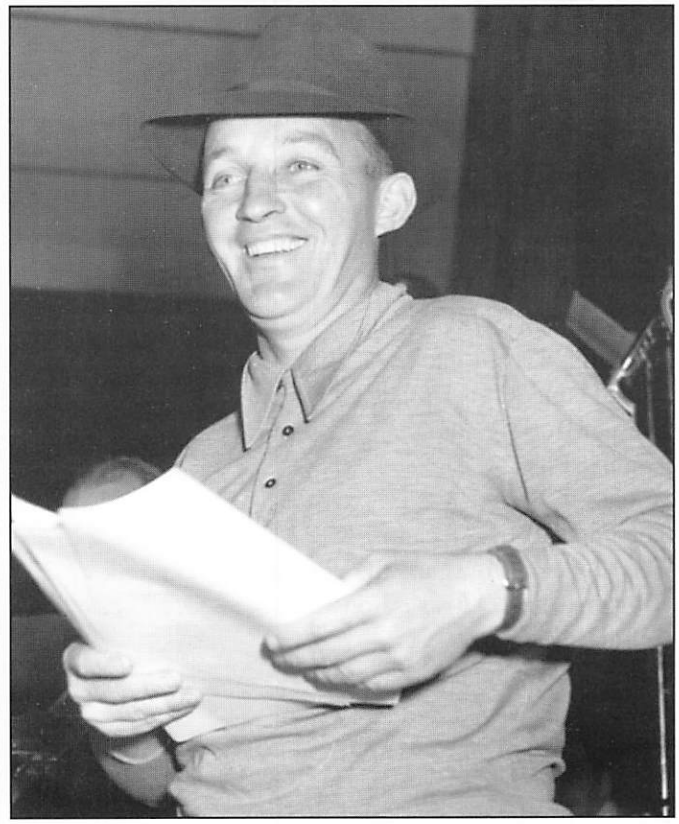
EDITORIAL

Holiday greetings to my fellow ICC members. Whether you are holding your first issue of BING, or have been receiving them for decades, we're pleased to welcome all of you to our 2010 winter issue. It hardly seems possible that another year has passed since we reviewed the events in the world of Crosbyana at the close of 2009. And what an amazing year it was, with the release of the Mosaic box set being among the major highlights. We couldn't possibly imagine how the year could be topped, but were we in for a surprise!

2010 will go down in ICC history as the greatest year for new Bing Crosby product being released since his death in 1977. At no time since that initial year following his passing, which saw most of the major record companies reissuing his albums as well as new compilations of old recordings, has there been more new albums released of rare material than in the past twelve months. And, with the PBS TV special, and new DVD releases (including another "Bing first", one of his classic films issued on the Blu-ray high definition format), 2010 may indeed have surpassed the 1977-78 season. As you will read in subsequent pages, the end is not in sight, which is a wonderful Christmas present for all of us!

Our thanks and gratitude must go to the Crosby family, Bing Crosby Enterprises, and Collector's Choice Music for making this wonderful material available. We look forward to more exciting releases in 2011. So, until we meet again in the spring, I wish all of you good health and much happiness for the coming New Year.

Greg Van Beek



I can only echo Greg's words and the new releases we detail in the coming pages will surely excite all Crosby fans. It really is mind-blowing to consider what is coming out of the Bing Crosby Archive and with Universal joining in with six Bing films in a DVD box set, it will be very easy to draw up a Christmas present list this year. There's even a new single with Bryn Terfel joining Bing on "White Christmas" and there's a video game for younger Crosby fans too.

The new issues received much publicity in the media but even the coverage they achieved was surpassed by the discovery of a very rare baseball film dating from 1960 found in Bing's cellar. It is quite remarkable how much exposure this generated all over the world and naturally we give details in this magazine.

As always, I have had to hold back a lot of material as space was fully used by a host of great articles. Among them, Ken Barnes tells us more about Bing's 1970 recording sessions whilst Richard Baker looks at some of Bing's work in 1968. We have details of the $2m settlement with the Crosby estate and there is news of an excellent resting place for Ron Bosley's wonderful collection. Bob Halls has again given us a blow-by-blow account of the Leeds meeting and our thanks are due to him for undertaking this very challenging task.

Greg Van Beek identifies the most precious item in his Crosby collection, Keith Parkinson considers *Waikiki Wedding* and Gord Atkinson reflects on Bing's Christmas classics. There is so much more to read - there's Ken Crossland, some interesting letters and Bob Achorn reviewing the latest book from Gary Giddins (no, it's not his second Bing volume – that's due out in 2012).

UK readers are being treated to an Argos advert featuring Bing as we go to press and please see "Bing on the Box" for further details.

Looking ahead, 2011 will be the 75th anniversary of the founding of Club Crosby and to mark this we shall be offering a CD of rare Kraft Music Hall material dating from 1935 and 1936 to members who receive our next issue. The CD will be priced to cover our costs with no element of profit so it's going to be a real bargain. It will be a limited edition and those who do not renew their subscription promptly may miss out. So don't delay!

All the best for Christmas and the New Year!

Malcolm Macfarlane

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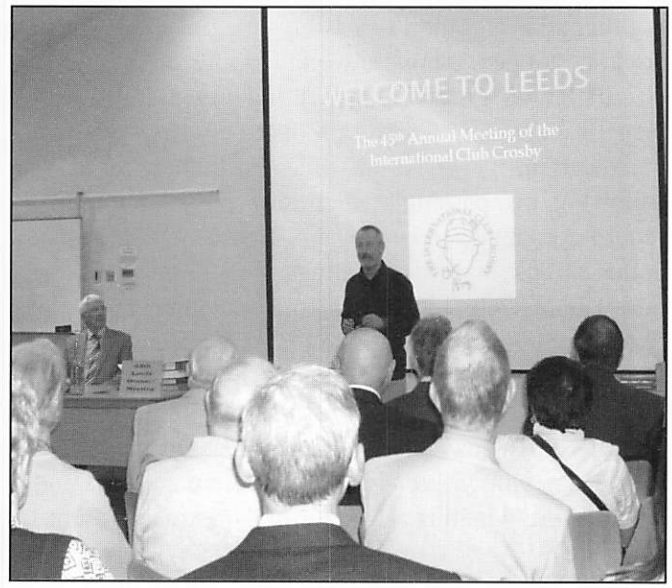
SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

My winter report is a little truncated as I have to compile it early due to holiday commitments but fortunately I do have time to report a very successful 45th Leeds meeting on Sunday the 3rd of October. The audience was attentive to a splendid presentation by Malcolm Macfarlane and we were pleased to receive visitors from Brazil and the United States. Bob Halls has the detail but here I would like to thank Malcolm for his professional and highly enjoyable feast of Crosbyana. We return next year by popular demand but would like to encourage more to come along and enjoy seeing and hearing Bing on the big screen. Unfortunately, if numbers attending decline it will no longer be viable to keep holding the meeting. Please consider giving your support to what is a wonderfully entertaining day out.

Bing Crosby Enterprises are to be commended for their superbly recorded and beautifully presented CDs and DVDs. The "So Rare" CDs are particularly attractive and with tracks ranging from "Just One More Chance" through "Buckin' the Wind", "Because", "My Old Kentucky Home" and the two golfing songs, the whole compilation is a Crosby treasure trove of rare material. If we now add the pleasure of listening to *Seasons / The Final Chapter, Return To Paradise Islands* and the delightful unreleased songs heard *On The Sentimental Side* we have a set of CDs which are pure Crosby magic. Well done BCE and we are pleased that you are now issuing more gems which may even be in our hands by the time this is being read.



Michael welcomes everyone to the Leeds meeting.

Subscriptions for 2011 are now due and remain at their previous level. May I appeal to all members to be prompt with their payment and thus avoid Wig and I having to send out a couple of hundred reminders. Your support would be appreciated.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of ICC with a wish that their involvement with the club will bring them interest and enjoyment as they interact with their fellow Bing enthusiasts.

UNITED STATES

Bob Elliott (Harpswell, Maine), Ray Flatlow (Brooklyn, New York), John Holland (Hamburg, New Jersey), Linda Stevens (Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts).

UNITED KINGDOM

Clive Rees (Abergavenny, Gwent).

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by the following members: –

Edward Broadley of Leeds has contributed a very generous sum towards club funds and his generosity is also reflected in the donations made by Jim Roche, Ken

Shaw, Harry C. Ross, Bob Halls, John Benstead, Arthur Blood, Frank Startup, Ian Patience, Edgar Lawson and Doreen C. Hubbard.

All donations are welcome and gratefully acknowledged and we thank our benefactors for their continuing support. If we inadvertently fail to mention your donation, please advise and we will make good in the next issue of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness we draw members attention to the passing of the following members: –
Larry Gunn (Mountain View, California), James Allen (Dublin, California), Jean Sprott (Coatbridge, Lanarkshire).

It was Cathie Wilson who gave us the sad news of the death of **Larry Gunn**. She wrote:
"Larry Gunn, long time Crosby Collector and one of the founders of Bing's Friends & Collectors Society passed away at age 93. He was also a long standing member of the ICC and Club Crosby. Our most happiest memories of Larry were his enthusiasm for Bing, his delight at participating in our Crosby Banquets and his love of dancing. He leaves a big space in Crosby Collecting circles. Larry was a dear friend and he loved Bing and his voice. I recall one time when we saw Bing in his Christmas performance at Laguna Hondahome in San Francisco that Larry literally froze when Bing spoke to him. He was so in awe of him that he could barely speak."

Jean Sprott was a regular visitor to Leeds where she was accompanied by her husband Matthew and her daughter Janice.

We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of the above members.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 (Sepia Records)

These attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £6.50 (including postage) and the price for Europe £7.00. Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins. The price for members in the rest of the world is £8.

Volume 7 will be available in April 2011.

CROSBY CALENDAR 2011

Malcolm Macfarlane's attractive tribute calendar to Ron Bosley remains available from me for £6.50 (including postage) and I would urge your support for the calendar so that we can continue to produce issues in the future.

LEEDS 2011

As I mentioned earlier, we are going to do it again! Sunday October 2nd 2011 is the date for your diary. This will also be the platinum jubilee celebration of the International Club Crosby. 75 years and still counting!

Michael Crampton

Christmas Comes Early For Bing Crosby Fans

Bing Crosby Archive Opens Up Vault Once Again. New Bing Crosby CD & DVD Releases Set For November 9th - From Collectors' Choice Music and Infinity Entertainment Group

These were the words on the media release in September which heralded another wonderful batch of Bing material comprising two DVD sets, five CDs and even a 7" vinyl single! Let me quote from the media release to give you the details.

Collectors' Choice Music feels most honored to be the distributor of releases direct from the Bing Crosby Archive. Earlier this year, Collectors' Choice reissued three classic Bing Crosby albums in Deluxe Editions (*Seasons*, *Return to Paradise Islands* and *El Senor Bing)*, a previously unreleased album (*On the Sentimental Side)*, a new compilation (*Bing on Broadway*), and a 2-CD set of Crosby rarities (*So Rare: Treasures from the Crosby Archive*).

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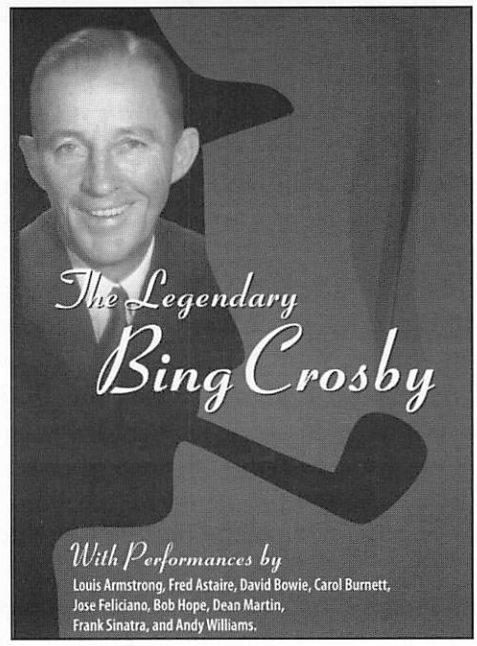
On January 25th 2011, Collectors' Choice will release *Bing & Rosie: The Crosby - Clooney Radio Sessions* (2-CD Set), *Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook* and *Bing Crosby: A Southern Memoir (Deluxe Edition)*

Beginning November 9th 2010, these titles can be purchased exclusively from the Collectors' Choice Music catalog and website at www.ccmusic.com

On September 28th 2010, the DVD of the acclaimed public broadcasting special, *The Legendary Bing Crosby,* originally available only through public broadcasting subscription, will make its retail debut.


The Legendary
Bing Crosby
With Performances by
Louis Armstrong, Fred Astaire, David Bowie, Carol Burnett,
Jose Feliciano, Bob Hope, Dean Martin,
Frank Sinatra, and Andy Williams.

(1) The Legendary Bing Crosby presents many of the entertainer's best performances from his classic network specials, which aired from 1954 to 1977, including recently discovered, digitally restored footage and clips
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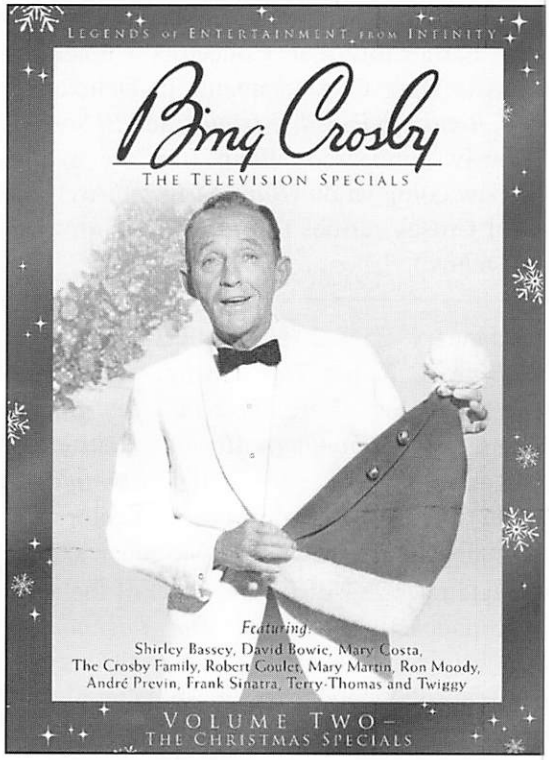
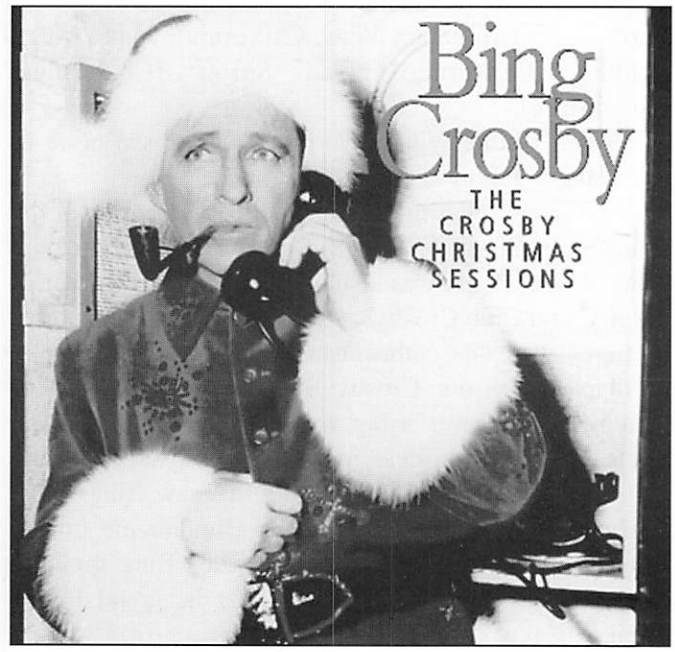
that have not been seen since their original broadcast. The program seamlessly blends full-song performances and duets with enlightening interviews from his wife Kathryn, daughter Mary, film critic Leonard Maltin, television personality Regis Philbin, music legend Andy Williams, and performer/musicologist Michael Feinstein. Performing with Bing in the show are Louis Armstrong, Fred Astaire, David Bowie, Carol Burnett, Jose Feliciano, Bob Hope, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra and Andy Williams. Thirty-five minutes of bonus material, not seen in the broadcast, includes additional interview segments and Crosby solos, as well as performances with Maurice Chevalier, Andy Williams and The Crosby Boys.


LEGENDS OF ENTERTAINMENT FROM INFINITY
Bing Crosby
THE TELEVISION SPECIALS
Featuring
Shirley Bassey, David Bowie, Mary Costa,
The Crosby Family, Robert Goulet, Mary Martin, Ron Moody,
André Previn, Frank Sinatra, Terry-Thomas and Twiggy
VOLUME TWO –
THE CHRISTMAS SPECIALS

(2) BING CROSBY - *The Television Specials – Volume Two: The Christmas Specials* (2-DVD set) features Bing's first holiday special, produced in 1961; his first color special from 1962 with Mary Martin; *Bing Crosby and the Sounds of Christmas*; and final special, *Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas*, which includes the iconic duet of "The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth" with David Bowie. All specials are presented in their original uncut form. Bonus Material includes: *Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank*, the 1957 color Christmas episode of *The Frank Sinatra Show*; out-takes from the 1962 Bing Crosby Christmas special; a rare Toys for Tots PSA; and the 1976 tourism film, *Bing's Britain*. Approximate Running Time: 268 Minutes.

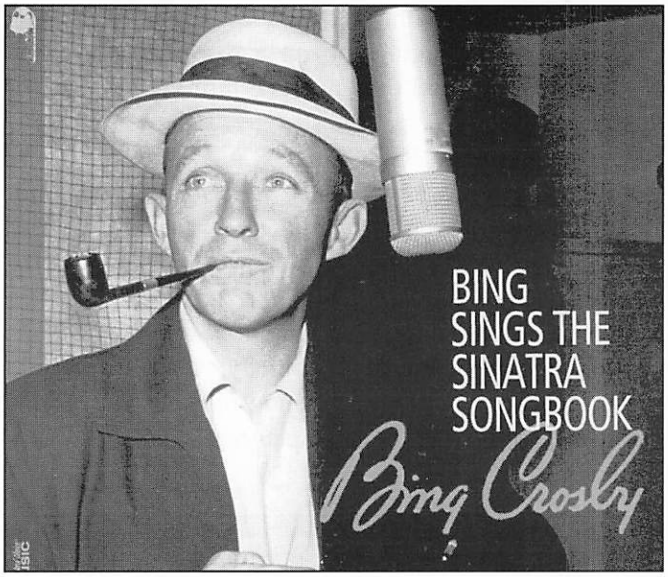
(3) BING CROSBY - *The Crosby Christmas Sessions*: *White Christmas; It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas; Jingle Bells* (slow and fast versions)*; Deck the Halls/Away in a Manger/O Little Town of Bethlehem/The First Noel; Adeste Fidelis/O Come All Ye Faithful; Here Comes Santa Claus* (with Peggy Lee); *The Christmas Song; Sleigh Ride*; and *Silent Night;* Bing's legendary duet with David Bowie on *The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth*; duets with Frank Sinatra on *We Wish You the Merriest* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (both from the *12 Songs of Christmas* album); duets with Ella Fitzgerald on *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and *Silver Bells*; the Columbia single *Just What I Wanted for Christmas* and *The Secret of Christmas*; the Reprise single *White World of Winter* and *It's Christmas Time Again.*



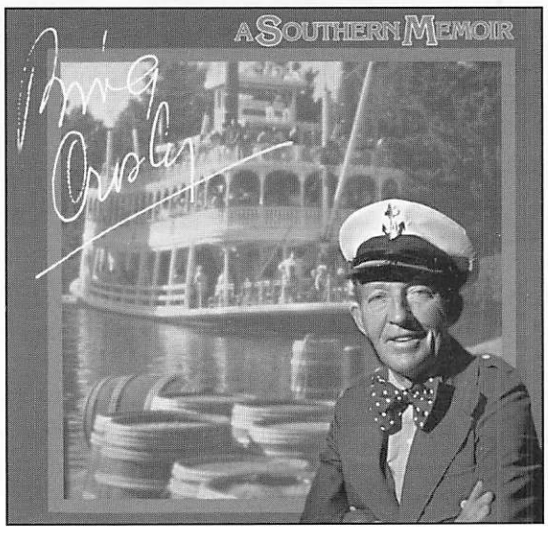
(4) BING CROSBY - *Bing Sings The Great American Songbook*: *I Want to Be Happy; Manhattan; 'S Wonderful; Ol' Man River; You Took Advantage of Me; Button up Your Overcoat; I've Got a Crush on You; You Do Something to Me; I Guess I'll Have to Change My Plan; Get Happy; Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone; Anything Goes; What Is There to Say; I Feel a Song Comin' On; Cheek to Cheek; The Nearness of You; How About You?; Don't Get Around Much Anymore; That Old Black Magic;* and *Almost Like Being in Love.* Four of the tracks ("Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone", "How About You?", "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" and "Almost Like Being In Love") are previously unreleased while the remaining 16 tracks made their debut last year on the acclaimed Mosaic Records 7-CD Boxed Set, **THE BING CROSBY CBS RADIO RECORDINGS 1954-56**.

(5) BING CROSBY - *Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook* is an 18-track collection of Bing singing songs that Sinatra made famous, the majority of them previously **unreleased!** Among the rarities, the Crosby-Sinatra duet on the medley of *Among My Souvenirs/September Song/As Time Goes By; Young at Heart; April in Paris; Imagination; Witchcraft; Where or When; All the Way; You Go to My Head; It Happened in*

Monterey; and a 2010 remix of *Summer Wind*, plus *High Hopes*, an alternate take from the *Thoroughly Modern Bing* album session; the CD debut of *South of the Border* from the *Songs I Love* album; *The Lady Is a Tramp; Too Marvelous for Words; I Get a Kick Out of You; Chicago; The Tender Trap*; and *Love and Marriage*. Liner notes by Michael Feinstein.



(6) BING CROSBY - *A Southern Memoir (Deluxe Edition)* This 1975 album of songs inspired by the South is among the rarest items in the Crosby canon, as it was only released in Britain. Bonus tracks include alternate versions of *On the Alamo; Alabamy Bound; Stars Fell on Alabama; Swanee;* and *Sleepy Time Down South*, and the unedited version of *Georgia on My Mind* to the versions that appear on the original album, which also include *Where the Morning Glories Grow; Carolina in the Morning; Way Down Yonder in New Orleans; Cryin' for the Carolines; She Is the Sunshine of Virginia;* and *Sailing Down the Chesapeake Bay*. Appearing for the first time ever is "Bing's South Texas Quail Hunting Medley," a private recording from the album sessions on which he substitutes some special lyrics for *Galway Bay/Mack the Knife/The Surrey with the Fringe on Top/The Pleasure of Your Company* that lampoon, in that ever-so-gentle Crosby way, friends like Phil Harris! Liner notes by Arne Fogel.



(7) BING CROSBY & ROSEMARY CLOONEY- *Bing & Rosie: The Crosby-Clooney Radio Sessions* This two-CD set presents **59 unreleased tracks** taken from their radio sessions (*The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric, The Ford Road Show* and *The Crosby - Clooney Show*), complete with some charming studio chatter and fidelity that rivals their commercial recordings. Includes their duets on *The Merry-Go-Run-Around; Takes Two to Tango; Chicago Style* (two versions); *Open up Your Heart* (with Bob Hope); *South Rampart Street Parade; Something to Remember You By* (three versions); *You're Just in Love* (two versions); *It's Only a Paper Moon; Easter Parade* (two versions); *People Will Say We're in Love* (two versions); *Only Forever;* a medley featuring *These Foolish Things Remind Me of You/We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye/You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To* (complete with flub and pickup take and versions of all three songs by themselves); *That's Amore; The Little Brown Jug; Sweet Genevieve; Shine on Harvest Moon* (two versions); *Buckle Down Winsocki; Indian Summer; Man (Uh-Huh) and Woman (Uh-Huh); Lily of Laguna*; a couple of Ford jingles; *Will You Still Be Mine*; another version of *We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye; I May Be Wrong; Would You Like to Take a Walk; They Can't Take That Away from Me;* another version of *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To; Let's Call the Whole Thing Off; Ain't We Got Fun; Isn't This a Lovely Day; Let's Put out the Lights and Go to Sleep; They Say It's Wonderful; Let's Take a Walk Around the Block; Don't Worry (About Tomorrow); Hey, Look Me Over; Anything You Can Do; What Takes My Fancy; Summertime; True Love; It's Been a Long, Long Time/Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries/Gimme a Little Kiss; Moon over Miami/Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland/There's a Long, Long Trail; Goodnight My Someone; September Song/As Time Goes By/Till We Meet Again; Any Town Is Paris When You're Young/Paris in the Spring/April in Paris/The Last Time I Saw Paris; Singin' in the Rain*; a rare promo record for Eastern Products; and the only two solo tracks on the set: Rosie's *You're in Kentucky Sure as You're Born* and Bing's *This Ole House*. Martin McQuade's notes tell the tale of this legendary team.

(8) Having sold hundreds of millions of records in the pre-MP3 era, it is only natural that Bing Crosby return with a record release, a 7" vinyl single of the Bing Crosby/David Bowie duet ***The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth,*** backed with a 1953 Bing Crosby/Ella Fitzgerald duet of ***White Christmas.***

****

Editor: These are wonderful releases and Collectors' Choice is offering them at:
The Legendary Bing Crosby $12.98
The Crosby Christmas Sessions $12.98*
Bing Sings the Great American Songbook $12.98*
Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook $12.98
A Southern Memoir (Deluxe Edition) $12.98
Bing & Rosie: The Crosby-Clooney Radio Sessions $21.98
The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth $7.98
The Television Specials – Volume Two: The Christmas Specials (DVD) $24.98
**Already available from Amazon UK at £11.99.*

I appreciate that members are still absorbing the last batch of releases financially but rest assured that Collectors' Choice will keep the new issues in their catalogue for a considerable time. Those of us outside the USA have to bear the extra postage costs and possibly import duty / VAT and it is appreciated that some may wish to wait for the CDs being made available in their own country. However, it is absolutely crucial that these issues are strongly supported as soon as members feel able to do so. If we do not buy the items, we run the risk of these marvellous releases from the Bing Crosby Archive drying up.

But there's even more to tempt you as well. It's a 3-DVD set containing six Bing films, four of which are new to DVD!

The Bing Crosby Collection (Universal Backlot)

Continuing their *Backlot* series, Universal have released The Bing Crosby Collection (Universal Backlot) formatted for Region 1 (USA & Canada). The 3-disc set has four new to DVD titles with *We're Not Dressing* being the lone re-release in the USA. *Mississippi* was released in the UK as part of a W. C. Fields Collection box set. The films are described in the press release as follows.

College Humor (1933, 81 min.)
A college professor (Bing Crosby) and the school's football star (Richard Arlen) fall for the same beautiful co-ed in this comedy featuring George Burns and Gracie Allen.

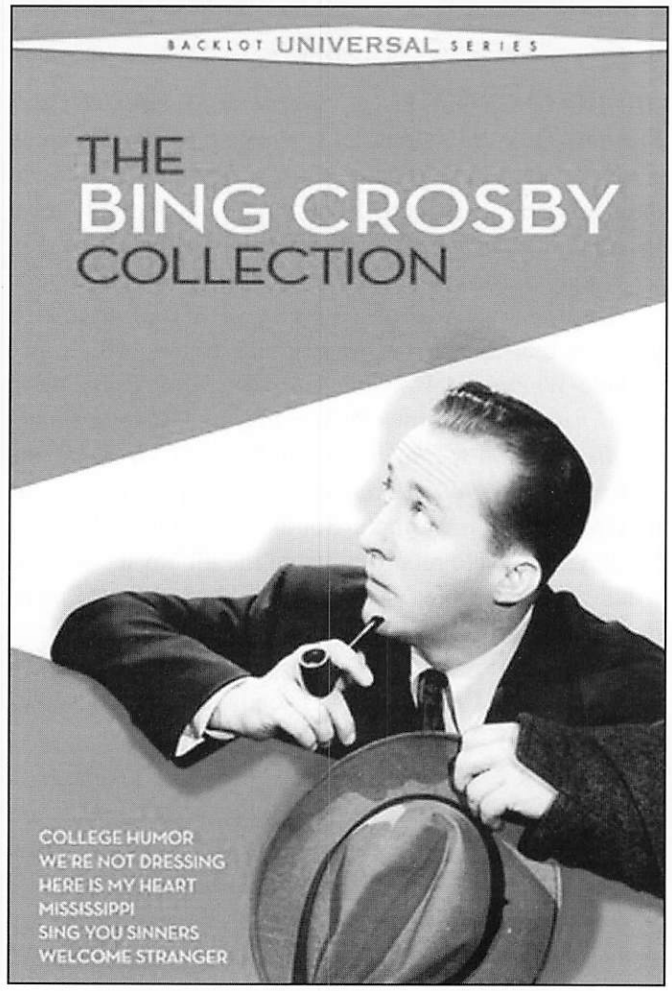
We're Not Dressing (1934, 75 min.)A lowly deckhand (Bing Crosby) is shipwrecked on an island with several passengers including the heiress (Carole Lombard) he's smitten with plus two wacky locals (George Burns and Gracie Allen).

Here Is My Heart (1934, 77 min.)
When a wealthy radio crooner (Bing Crosby) falls for an icy Russian princess, he goes undercover as a hotel waiter in order to gain access to her suite - and her heart.

Mississippi (1935, 74 min.)
Set in the Old South, a disgraced gentleman (Bing Crosby) takes a singing job on a riverboat where the captain (W.C. Fields) tries to teach him the meaning of honor.

Sing You Sinners (1938, 91min.)
Bing Crosby, Fred MacMurray and Donald O'Connor star as a trio of talented brothers who travel to Los Angeles seeking fortune only to get mixed up at the racetrack.

Welcome Stranger (1947, 108 min.)
In this charming musical comedy, a crotchety old physician (Barry Fitzgerald) finds himself sharing his medical practice with an impetuous younger doctor (Bing Crosby).



Bonus features will be trailers for a few of the titles and English subtitles will be available for all. The retail price is $49.98, but Amazon.com is offering the collection at $36.99.

Many of us have waited a lifetime to have some of these films in pristine condition with *Here Is My Heart* being the particular standout. What a wonderful

collection! Now how about *Top O' the Morning* coming out too?

I think your editor will have to remortgage his house so that he can buy everything that's on offer! However there's one thing he won't be buying but it might appeal to the younger members of our readers' families...

MAFIA II

Mafia II is a third-person action-adventure video game, which was released on PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and Microsoft Windows in August 2010. The game is set from 1943 to 1951 in Empire Bay (the name is a reference to New York's state nickname "The Empire State") a fictional city based on New York City, with influences from Chicago and Detroit. ***Mafia II*** has three different in-game radio stations, Empire Central Radio, Empire Classic Radio and Delta Radio, with licensed music, news and commercials. The radio stations include music from different genres and there's a massive list of pop songs from the 1940s and 1950s in the game's soundtrack including the following Bing items.

By the Light of the Silvery Moon (film version)
I Haven't Time to Be a Millionaire
I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams
Pennies from Heaven
The Pessimistic Character
There'll Be a Hot Time in the Town of Berlin (with The Andrews Sisters)
Vict'ry Polka (with The Andrews Sisters)

BING CROSBY BACK FROM THE GRAVE

This was the heading in a press release received on October 19 which continued as shown.

- Brit opera star Bryn Terfel creates unique duet for world's best-selling song –

- Odds of 'White Christmas' for Christmas No.1 higher than for the real thing

It has been covered by everyone from Elvis Presley to Andrea Bocelli, Doris Day to Boy George and it's the world's best-selling song of all time. But today a Welshman announced his bid to help Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" to Christmas No.1, the first time ever that the legendary singer would reach No.1 since UK charts began in 1952.

Bryn Terfel, the world-renowned bass-baritone and Britain's most respected opera singer, has recorded the first ever duet posthumously with Bing on the world's favourite seasonal song. Crosby's last "White Christmas" duet was with Martha Mears nearly 70 years ago for the film *Holiday Inn.*

William Hill confirmed that the single has been tipped for Christmas No.1 - a feat which until recently was sewn up by *X Factor* but was given new hope after last year's upstaging by Rage Against The Machine. If anyone can beat Simon Cowell's domination for a second time, Bing can. With odds of 6/1 the duet has more chance of being this year's Christmas No.1 than the UK has of actually having a white Christmas (for which odds are 8/1).

Furthermore, William Hill stated that the return can be substantially increased by double betting at odds of 65/1. So if it is a White Christmas and Bing/Bryn reaches Christmas No.1 then the windfall would be significant - as if all your Christmases really had come at once! The single will be released on December 13th.

Today Bryn Terfel said of the duet:

"It's such an honour not only to be sharing a track with one of the best loved singers in the world but to be singing one of the best songs ever written. (No pressure!)

I hope everyone will enjoy it."

Rupert Adams of William Hill added:

"Bryn definitely has the X Factor and we are taking no risks offering just 6/1 that he tops the Xmas charts".

And Gennaro Castaldo from HMV said of Bing and Bryn's chances:

"Last year we saw how the Internet and social media could be used to great effect to determine the Christmas No.1. People might assume the same will happen again, but I think it's unlikely we'll see such a co-ordinated campaign for a while, so it's entirely possible that a more conventional song will top the charts this Christmas - and what could be more traditional that a wonderful cover of a festive classic."

Bryn Terfel, shares much in common with the great, late singer - their deep, velvety voices blend perfectly on the festive song, and they even share the same golf handicap. 'White Christmas' is the world's best-selling song with experts estimating that as many as 100 million copies of the song have been purchased since its 1942 release.

The single will also appear on the album 'Bryn Terfel: Carol's and Christmas Songs', to be released on December 6th. The double-disc album features the very best loved songs and carols from the festive season plus a bonus Welsh-language CD.

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Within hours, there was a media blitz all over the UK and the BBC web site added some more details.

Producers combined Terfel's voice and that of Crosby, who died 33 years ago, in a concert hall at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

Both artists have the same record label, which has the rights to the release.

Bryn Terfel said: "It's a beautiful song".

The star revealed it took two sessions to record the song because of the difficulty involved in blending his vocals and new orchestration in with the original.

He said: "In the studio they play the original track, then me, the orchestra and the choir try and sing it at exactly same time.

"It wasn't very easy. That's why it needed two sessions which is unheard of."

He also talked about the strangeness of recording the festive classic at the height of summer.

He said: "We recorded this in July. We had people coming into the studio in Christmas hats. But you know, hearing 'White Christmas', it's still as good as it was. We always had music in the background during Christmas and 'White Christmas' was always there."

The single will appear on an album of carols and Christmas songs from around the world and Wales, to be released in December. Producer Sid McLauchlan said: "We didn't know it was going to work until we were in the studio."

He said they had to work out the instrumentation used in the original recording and write it out for their 60-piece orchestra.

"We recorded a new orchestra but at the same time it's mixed with the old orchestra. It has the added advantage that it's got more vintage. It gives the whole thing a different quality. You don't think it sounds old but you know it's not new either."

Mr McLauchlan said bass-baritone Terfel faced a similar challenge when delivering his part. He said: "Bing is very flexible in where he puts his voice. That was a real challenge for Bryn. He had to try to find those same spots, singing everything in harmony.

"It's hard enough to sing when someone is with you but when the person is only virtually there, when you have only the voice, it's much more so. He had to really rely on his own ears and feelings for the right way for him and Bing to sync up to make it match."

Terfel will be hoping for more success with the single than he enjoyed the last time he released a version - his 2000 cover of 'White Christmas' failed to chart.

Bookies have put the new version at 6-1 to top the charts. Terfel said: "Odds of 6-1 - that's not bad."

(Editor: I would be surprised if this reached No. 1 in the UK but I'll support the laudable target by buying it. By the way, it is true that Bing has not had a No. 1 hit in the UK. The British charts did not start until 1952 when Bing's hits were beginning to become less frequent although he did chart on many occasions after that at a lower level with a top position of No. 3.

So what does everyone think? Richard Baker was quick off the mark in canvassing opinion on Steve Fay's Bing Crosby Fan Forum writing:

I'd be interested to know what others think. Sacrilege? Or a very interesting and welcome move to get Bing's voice before the paying mass of the Christmas shoppers? Or merely welcome in keeping Bing's name alive?

A voice overlaid and singing in unison with the original does not strike me as very clever. It does not bear any comparison with the sort of duets that Bing was so good at when teamed with many first rate partners, but I suppose the answer to that might be "how could it be?"

But why do it at all? I can accept a short advertising skit with Bing in the part of a Christmas rapper. That was quite clever and also a little funny. I find it very difficult to accept messing around with a great popular classic. It is certainly not an improvement and it does not seem to me to be very cleverly done.

I also have a problem about any concept of keeping Bing's name before the public in this particular way, because it merely reinforces the popular stereotype - that Bing was "the guy who sang White Christmas".

Maggie Ryan was ecstatic, others were not so sure.

I'm dreaming of a time when the classical popular songs of the past are not tampered with in such a manner. Some hopes! Perhaps I'll just trash my existing Bryn Terfel CDs. (comment seen on YouTube)

We'll have to wait until late December until we know the outcome.

Incidentally, when news like this breaks, I fire off an email to a few Bing contacts on an ad hoc and often inconsistent basis. Really I ought to set up a proper system so if anyone wants to be on my e-mailing list for Bing items, simply email me and I'll add you to it.

Estate wins $2 million for Bing Crosby royalties

In our last issue we managed to slip in the result of the long running dispute between HLC Properties and Universal Music Group. *Variety* magazine gave further details as follows.

Jury gives company partial victory in dispute with UMG

A Los Angeles Superior Court jury awarded the company that holds Bing Crosby's property rights more than $2 million in royalties from Universal Music Group on June 30, closing one chapter in a legal wrangle that has run more than a decade.

However, attorneys for HLC Inc., which administers the late singer's rights, failed to convince jurors that Crosby's UMG contract should be terminated, or that HLC should be awarded the vocalist's master recordings.

The conflict between HLC and UMG is not over: In December, a suit filed in September 2009 over Crosby's digital sales is scheduled for trial in L.A. Superior Court.

Ranked No. 1 among vocalists of the pre-rock 'n'

roll era by chart researcher Joel Whitburn, Crosby, who died in 1977, tallied nearly 300 chart records between 1931 and 1954; his hits included "White Christmas," generally acknowledged as the best-selling single of all time.

The award covers unpaid royalties on CDs issued by UMG, which holds masters dating back to Crosby's work for Decca in the early '30s.

During a three-and-a-half-week trial, attorneys for HLC successfully argued that a most favored nation clause* in Crosby's recording contract entitled him to higher CD royalty payments.

HLC first filed suit in July 2000; the trial consolidated two later complaints from 2003 and 2005.

The singer's daughter Mary Crosby excoriated UMG in a sharply worded statement issued after the trial.

"Recording artists have a long history of being taken advantage of by their labels," she said, "and despite the incredible contribution my father made to the world of music, he was no exception...It seems that record companies prefer to keep things in litigation for as long as possible because most people don't have the resources to stick it out. This tactic generally works, because the majority of artists settle out of court for far less than they're due."

A UMG spokesman said the company had no comment.

HLC had also sought rescission of Crosby's 1943 recording contract and termination of joint venture agreements from 1949 and 1956, and control of the 1,200 masters the singer cut for the UMG labels. HLC's attorney Mark Brodka told *Variety*, "The jury answered in the negative on all counts."

Crosby's lawyers will next seek a piece of the digital pie. Though Der Bingle may be a figure from a now-distant pop past, Brodka claims that his music nonetheless accounted for some $1 million in downloads between 2004 and 2009.

The 2009 action alleges that UMG breached Crosby's contract by offering his music as downloads and cellphone mastertones, and seeks all monies received by the company from those sales.

Christopher Morris

*(*A most favored nation clause [also called a most favored customer clause or most favored licensee clause] is a contract provision in which a seller [or licensor] agrees to give the buyer [or licensee] the best terms it makes available to any other buyer [or licensee].)*

(Editor: There was a fascinating follow-up involving Dick Dinman on his *DVD Classics Corner* radio show heard on station WMPG from Maine. Over a period of about an hour Dick interviewed **Mary Crosby** and attorney **George Knopfler** about the successful outcome of the battle with Universal Music Group. Dick outlined the creative accounting practices used by many large corporates in the entertainment world but wondered why it took so long for the dispute to come to trial. Mary explained that her mother took a long time to figure things out and it was not until 1988 that an audit was undertaken. Litigation eventually ensued but it was ten years before they got before a jury. These types of expensive delays often force other artists to give up the struggle. George Knopfler explained that the law suit was all about CD sales. Royalties of $4m should actually have been $6m+. Motions for back interest have been submitted and the results are awaited. Mr. Knopfler said that Mary's husband Mark Brodka had carried the torch for years and put in thousands of hours. Mary was asked if it had all been emotional for them? Mary said that it had indeed been very hard to all of them as a family. They were all appalled at the treatment by Universal. Mr. Knopfler said Universal's attitude was "You didn't complain for 50 years. You screwed up because you trusted us.")

Kathryn Crosby: My Life with Bing

We gave advance notice of Kathryn Crosby's one-woman show at the Cabaret at the Castle in Hollywood on June 28 and 29. Subsequently Broadwayworld.com published a review which we have great pleasure in reproducing.

Kathryn Crosby's LIFE WITH BING with Musical Direction by Edward Sayegh played last week at Cabaret at the Castle. In the show, Crosby performs classic songs of stage and screen, and shares anecdotes about the famous and their lives during Hollywood and Broadway's golden era. BroadwayWorld brings you a sneak peek below!

Kathryn with Edward Sayegh.

Mrs. Crosby took center stage and regaled the patrons with stories and songs that made she and her contemporaries famous. The former Kathryn Grant, known publicly as Kathryn Crosby, was born in the 'Deep South' and appeared on stage from the age of 3. A graduate of the University of Texas and a student nurse at one point, she found her way into films via the beauty pageant circuit. The fresh-faced hopeful soon rose up through the standard starlet ranks from unbilled parts to chipper sis types and decorative love interests alongside filmdom's top male stars. She appeared opposite Richard Kiley in *The Phenix City Story* (1955), Tony Curtis in *Mister Cory* (1957), Jack Lemmon in *Operation Mad Ball* (1957), James Stewart in *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959) and Victor Mature in *The Big Circus* (1959), among others. Her best-known role, however, was as the princess-in-distress in the special effects laden epic fantasy *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), which has since reached semi-cult status.

However, Kathryn was unchallenged as an actress and retired after marrying singer Bing Crosby in 1957. They had three children, including actress Mary Crosby of 'Dallas' fame. She, along with her children, dutifully appeared opposite her husband singing and lightly joking in his many popular Christmas-special presentations and even hosted some syndicated TV series. After Bing's death in 1977, however, she slowly involved herself in acting again, appearing every now and then on stage in such productions as *Same Time, Next Year; Charley's Aunt;* and most recently, *State Fair* in 1996. In addition to authoring two sets of memoirs ('Bing and Other Things' and 'My Life with Bing'), Kathryn now offers lucky patrons a glimpse into a life filled with all the glittering Hollywood glamor that is many American's dream.

(Editor: Kathryn followed up her successful show with an appearance on CRN's cable radio program "PM Show with Robert Conrad" on July 1.)

Howard Crosby Live!

Bing's nephew, Howard, will be singing at the Mayor's charity benefit concert on Thursday, February 24, 2011 at the Camberley Theatre in Camberley, just outside London. Howard has been part of a three person show at charity benefits around the western USA, which includes plenty of his Uncle Bing's material. He always makes a special point to pay tribute to Bing from the stage, and tell some personal stories about him. The trio is completed by piano player Randy Kaping and Gwen Lyons, a singer/songwriter and harpist from the Seattle area.

If you are in the area, try and get along to see Howard. You will find him to be a nice guy and he'll enjoy meeting you.

Crosby House celebration

There was an opportunity to celebrate a 19th-century style birthday at the Crosby House Museum on Sunday, September 18. The Tumwater Historical Association celebrated the birthday of Cordelia Crosby (the grandmother of Bing) in August 1860. There were yard games and music. The museum is based at 703 Deschutes Way S.W., Tumwater (at the entrance of Tumwater Historical Park), Washington.

The Ron Bosley Collection

In our last issue, I described the situation with regard to the preservation of Ron's incredible collection of photos and scrapbooks. There has been a happy ending!

I received an email from **Bill Stimson,** president, Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater, in Spokane and this is what he had to say.

"I was happy to see that you re-printed Ted McGreggor's editorial calling for more attention to Bing's legacy in Spokane. I was particularly pleased by your closing cheer and suggestion we might be interested in some photos and scrapbooks. The answer is, yes!

Let me give you some background on what is going on in Spokane. Ted McGreggor, the publisher of the influential weekly of this area, *The Inlander*, is a member of a little discussion group we formed to look at means of preserving the historic Clemmer Theater (now the Bing Crosby Theater). Our favorite idea, as Ted says in the editorial, is to combine The Bing with a now nearly vacant building next door and making the two into a complex devoted to memorializing Bing and his era of music.

This is a big ambition, but one with real prospects. Two weeks ago the owner of a small hotel near The Bing (as everyone here has come to call the Bing Crosby Theater) said he liked the idea of the larger complex and made an offer on the empty building next door. If he succeeds in buying it, he says, the first floor would be ours to use as a museum at no cost. His benefit would be having such a museum and the theater as attractions to hotel guests.

The theater itself is privately owned and for the present, at least, self-sustaining. In the long-term we worry about its preservation. It would be the perfect permanent monument to Bing.

I don't know if you recall the location of the theater, but one of its great assets is that it is at the center of the tourist area of Spokane. It is right across the street from Spokane's 12-story grand hotel, the Davenport, and within a city block of at least six first-rate restaurants. The building itself, as you may remember from visits to Spokane, is a beautifully preserved 1915 "movie palace"

— one of the oldest of its type still existing in this country. It couldn't be more fitting as a memorial to one of the 20th century's greatest movie stars. And of course its main recommendation as a historic place is that it was the theater where Bing and Al Rinker honed their act for the five months just prior to their departure for Hollywood and fame. The theater is close to several other locations that played parts in Bing's early life, such as the building that once held Bailey's Music Store and the location of a speakeasy where the Musicaladers appeared.

To see photos of the Bing and get the full background of the theater's connections to Bing's career, I refer you to our organization's website:

www.bingcrosbytheateradvocates.com.

In regards to your "Postscript" about the future of Ron Bosley's photo collection: I would hate to see it scattered to the winds. Perhaps it could be the nucleus of a museum exhibit here. I don't have $1,700 sitting around at the moment. But maybe we could pass the hat in Spokane and get up the funds. We might be able to coordinate with Gonzaga on the costs in a way that would make it feasible for both of us.

In sum, I believe there is a serious possibility of funding a real Bing Crosby Museum in Spokane. I would see such a facility as a magnet for donations, celebrity tributes, and the like, the kinds of things that would keep the Crosby legacy current."

Following this, Bill obviously "passed the hat" and a local charitable foundation – The Jerry and Patty Dicker Foundation - has purchased the entire collection and had it shipped to Spokane. The Foundation is to donate the collection to the Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater and photos from the collection are to be immediately displayed in the Bing Crosby Theater. In the longer term there are plans for a Bing Crosby Museum in Spokane. One great advantage of having the collection in Spokane is that it would be available to researchers who already go to Spokane to consult the Gonzaga archive.

This is a wonderful outcome and Ron Bosley himself would have been delighted with it.

Malcolm Macfarlane

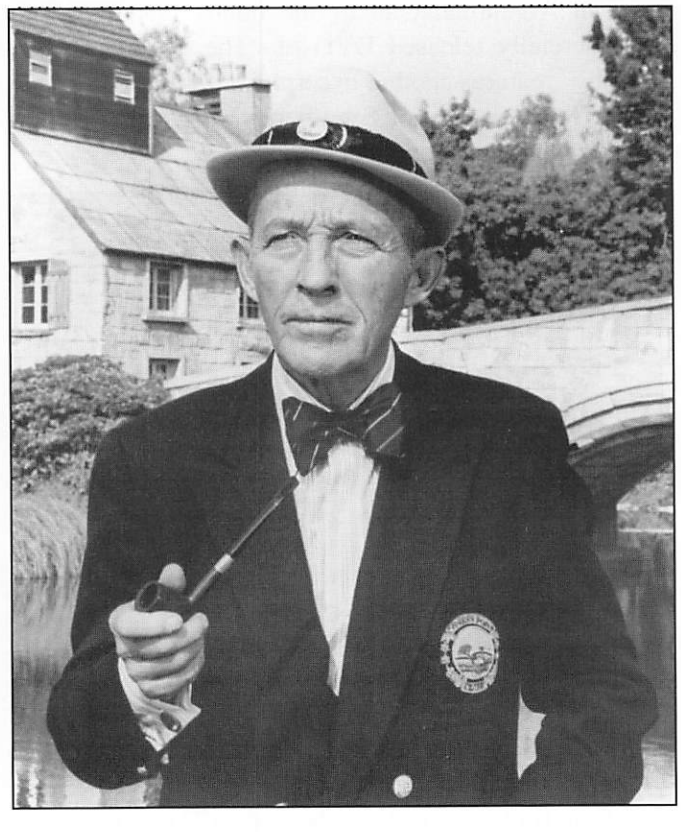
The Bing Crosby Jacket

Greg Van Beek tells us about the "crown jewel" of his collection.

Bing Crosby fans (or 'supporters', as he preferred to have them called), are a diverse group, with varied interests into this amazing man and his equally amazing career. For some, it's a general fondness for his music and films, and never moves beyond such into the realm of what might be called a 'collector'. Those that are bona fide collectors are an equally eclectic group, who usually fall into 'completist' or 'specialized' categories. Some want it all... every recording, every movie, every radio and TV show. The whole shebang. Others are content to have "mini" collections of a specific aspect of Bing's career. There are some who are solely sheet music collectors, which in itself is an ever expanding discovery. For others, it's records. Some just 78 rpm collectors, wishing to have originals in pristine condition. The possibilities for a Crosby collector are endless!

Yet whatever one collects, there's always a 'crown jewel' to their collections. One item that stands out among the rest in terms of rarity, uniqueness or in some cases, a one of a kind item of which there is no other. This is my 'crown jewel' story.

For years, I had wanted an item from Bing's wardrobe to add to my collection. Not just an ordinary shirt or necktie. But something that would be instantly recognizable from his appearances wearing the garment. A few years back, I had the opportunity to acquire such a garment, from the high bidder who won it at the Bing Crosby Estate Butterfield auction in May of 1982. To the casual observer, it appears to be a rather well worn double breasted suit coat. It certainly looks "Bing-ish", with the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am "Cypress Point Club" emblem covering the front breast pocket. In reality, it's the last suit he wore in a feature film. Those who've seen the 1974 MGM anthology *That's Entertainment!* will no doubt recall Bing's contribution, on the 'shabby and scruffy' back lot from MGM's heyday, where he introduces excerpts from his MGM films *Going Hollywood* (1933) and *High Society* (1956). This is the very jacket he is wearing in the movie.



Bing in *That's Entertainment!*

His spot in the picture was filmed in December, 1973, just weeks before entering the hospital on New Years Eve, where he had two-fifths of his left lung removed in January of 1974. Behind the scenes bonus footage included in the *That's Entertainment!* Trilogy DVD box set shows Bing smoking his pipe between takes on the MGM lot. This is the last film ever taken of him doing so. He gave up smoking following the surgery. Evidence of his prior pipe smoking is quite apparent on this jacket as it appears today. There's a 1/4 inch diameter hole burned through the front breast pocket exposing the white lining, just to the right of the Cypress Point patch, due to Bing slipping the still-glowing pipe into the pocket on occasion!

Bing purchased this jacket from Saks Fifth Avenue in New York, most likely during his extended stay there in February of 1968. The patch on the front breast pocket appears to have been cut off of a different dark blue suit coat and sewn onto this jacket, as it has a 3/8 inch blue cloth border around the gold diameter of the patch. This is very visible during the close up shots in *That's Entertainment*. Bing was first photographed wearing the jacket during a late 1969 shoot, the results of which adorn the front cover of this issue of BING. One such pose was used for the cover shot on the 1976 Ken Barnes produced Bing Crosby album, "Beautiful Memories".

For those who've seen the recent PBS special "The Legendary Bing Crosby", there's a black and white excerpt of Bing performing his theme song, "Where The Blue of The Night", flanked by Kathryn, on the June 1970 Buenos Aires TV telethon. Bing is seen wearing this very jacket on the show. He wore it often during that stay in Argentina. One of the bonus features of the commercially released DVD of "The Legendary Bing Crosby" features another excerpt from this 1970 Buenos Aires Telethon, that of Bing performing Irving Berlin's 'White Christmas' on the show.

At Laguna Honda Hospital in 1971

Fast forward to December 14, 1971, where Bing and his family make their annual Christmas appearance at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco, performing carols for the residents there. Again, Bing wore this very jacket to the performance.

For Bing's UK admirers, he wore this jacket during his first appearance on the BBC's Michael Parkinson TV Program, taped September 18, 1972 for airing December 23rd. Bing performs 'White Christmas' on the show, making this jacket all the more special, being that there are two different occasions where Bing sang his most famous song sporting the jacket, and both were videotaped for television.

A few more details about the jacket; a "BING CROSBY" name tag appears at the base of the neck area. He had these tags sewn onto each of his suits, shirts, and neckties. The lining inside the jacket in the armpit area is torn at the seams, indicating that some alterations were made to the coat, probably prior to its use in *That's Entertainment!*. It is common for movie and TV wardrobe to have tattered and torn inside linings following alterations. Since the inside lining isn't seen on camera, the extra time isn't spent sewing up the tears. For those curious about Bing's measurements, while I have no mannequin to properly measure the waist, I can tell you that with just an ordinary tape measure and the jacket lying flat, it measures 19 inches across the shoulders. The sleeve length is 23 inches, from the top of the shoulder to the cuff. The waist, measured flat across the mid section, is 19 3/4 inches. Overall length, from the top of the collar to the bottom edge, is 31 inches.

The jacket hangs in Greg's Bing closet

While I recognized the jacket immediately as being from *That's Entertainment!* it was only later that I discovered

the other instances where Bing wore it. Indeed, it must've been a favorite of his. It certainly is a favorite of mine now. While I'm about the same height as Bing, at 5 feet 10 inches, I'm not quite as slim and trim as he was, so the jacket does not fit me. But it makes for a nice display, and certainly is a great conversation piece in my "Bing closet"! It would probably be the last item of 'Crosbyana' I would ever part with.

Greg Van Beek

'Best Game Ever' Broadcast Found in Bing Crosby's Wine Cellar

The item which has given Bing the most publicity in recent years was the discovery of a rare film of a baseball game in Bing's cellar. Television news broadcasts, newspapers and radio stations all over the world covered it and many members contacted me to tell me about it. Here's the coverage from the *New York Times* of September 23.

How a near pristine, black-and-white reel of the entire television broadcast of the deciding game of the 1960 World Series — long believed to be lost forever — came to rest in the dry and cool wine cellar of Bing Crosby's home near San Francisco is not a mystery to those who knew him.

Crosby loved baseball, but as a part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates he was too nervous to watch the Series against the Yankees, so he and his wife went to Paris, where they listened by radio.

"He said, 'I can't stay in the country,' " his widow, Kathryn Crosby, said. " 'I'll jinx everybody.' "

He knew he would want to watch the game later — if his Pirates won — so he hired a company to record Game 7 by kinescope, an early relative of the DVR, filming off a television monitor. The five-reel set, found in December in Crosby's home, is the only known complete copy of the game, in which Pirates second baseman Bill Mazeroski hit a game-ending home run to beat the Yankees, 10-9. It is considered one of the greatest games ever played.

Crosby, the singer and movie and TV star, had more foresight than the television networks and stations, which erased or discarded nearly all of the Major League Baseball games they carried until the 1970s.

A canny preservationist of his own legacy, Crosby, who died in 1977, kept a half-century's worth of records, tapes and films in the wine cellar turned vault in his Hillsborough, Calif., home.

"Bing Crosby was way ahead of his time," said Nick Trotta, senior library and licensing manager for Major League Baseball Productions, the sport's archivist. Three years ago, baseball acquired the rights to Yankees pitcher Don Larsen's perfect game in the 1956 World Series — leaving the finale of the 1960 World Series high on its wish list. The hunt for old games — this one unseen on TV since its original broadcast — is constant, serendipitous and often futile. Great games like the Game 7 in 1960 are often recalled with just a few newsreel clips.

Crosby was so superstitious about hexing his Pirates that he and Kathryn listened to the game with their friends Charles and Nonie de Limur in Paris.

"We were in this beautiful apartment, listening on shortwave, and when it got close Bing opened a bottle of Scotch and was tapping it against the mantel," Kathryn Crosby said. "When Mazeroski hit the home run, he tapped it hard; the Scotch flew into the fireplace and started a conflagration. I was screaming and Nonie said, 'It's very nice to celebrate things but couldn't we be more restrained?' "

After Crosby viewed the 2-hour-36-minute game, probably in a screening room in the house, the films took their place in the vault, said Robert Bader, vice president for marketing and production for Bing Crosby Enterprises.

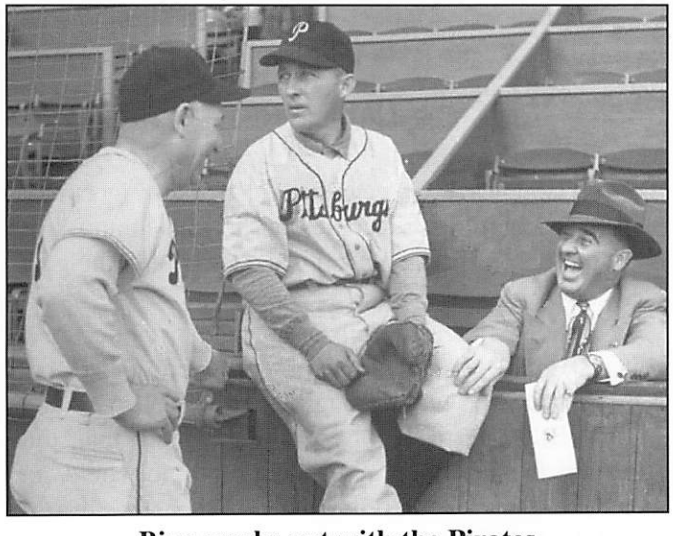
They remained there undisturbed until December when Bader was culling videotapes of Crosby's TV specials for a DVD release — part of the estate's goal of resurrecting his body of work.

He spotted two reels lying horizontally in gray canisters labeled, "1960 World Series." They were stacked close to the ceiling with home movies and sports instructional films. An hour or so later he found three others on other shelves. Intrigued, he screened the 16-millimeter film on a projector. It was Game 7, called by the Yankees' Mel Allen and the Pirates' Bob Prince — the complete NBC broadcast. The film had not degraded and has been transferred to DVD.

"I had to be the only person to have seen it in 50 years," Bader said. "It was just pure luck."

Bader's call to baseball last spring initiated months of talks that have led to an agreement allowing the MLB Network to televise the game in the off-season, and wrap interviews and other programming around it, with Bob Costas as the host.

"It's a time capsule," Trotta said.



Bing works out with the Pirates

Hearing of the broadcast's discovery, Jim Reisler, a historian born in Pittsburgh, sounded stunned.

"Wow," he said. His book about the game — "The Best Game Ever" — would have benefited from seeing the NBC production, he said; he relied on the radio call. "It would have given me a greater sense of the tremendous ebb and flow of the game," he said.

Dick Groat, the Pirates shortstop, said: "It was such a unique game to begin with. It was back and forth, back and forth. It was unbelievable."

The production is simple by today's standards. NBC appeared to use about five cameras. The graphics were simple (the players' names and little else) and rarely used. There were no instant replays, no isolated cameras, no analysis, no dugout reporters and no sponsored trivia quizzes.

Viewers looked at the hand-operated Forbes Field scoreboard that on that day (of 19 runs and 24 hits) got a vigorous workout. Occasionally they saw newsreel cameras atop the ballpark roof.

Price and Allen rarely interacted; the former called the first half, Allen the second half — putting him on the air for Yogi Berra's three-run homer in the sixth inning (Allen first called it foul); Pirates' catcher Hal Smith's eighth inning homer to put Pittsburgh on top, 9-7 ("That base hit will long be remembered," Allen said as the film showed Roberto Clemente — Allen called him Bob — bounding around the bases with joy); and Mazeroski's winning drive to left field ("And the fans go wild," Allen said).

The game included the play in which a ground ball hit by Bill Virdon to Yankees shortstop Tony Kubek kicked off the dirt and hit him smack in the Adam's apple. He fell on his back, sat up within a minute looking dazed, stood up, then lobbied Manager Casey Stengel unsuccessfully to stay in.

It also included remarkable base-running by Mickey Mantle with one out in the top of the ninth. The Yankees were trailing, 9-8, with Mantle on first and Gil McDougald on third. Berra hit a sharp grounder that was grabbed by first baseman Rocky Nelson, who quickly stepped on the bag for the second out. For a split second, Nelson seemed ready to throw home in time for a tag play on McDougald for the final out of the World Series.

But Nelson immediately became distracted by Mantle, who never took off for second when Berra hit the ball and was now standing just a few feet away. Nelson reached to tag Mantle. but he feinted and dived back safely into first. McDougald scored, and the game was tied 9-9.

"How about that?" Allen said after Mantle's play. But just minutes later, Mazeroski stepped to the plate. NBC's sound was good enough to hear a fan shout, "Just get on, Billy, get on!" Mazeroski did more than that. After his home run, fans poured onto the field and danced on the Pittsburgh dugout.

Only later did Bing Crosby witness the joy and jubilation recorded just for him.

"I can still see Bing hitting the mantel with the Scotch," Kathryn Crosby said.

Richard Sandomir

(Editor: One bit of coverage I particularly enjoyed was a spot on ABC-TV News on September 24 when Robert Bader, to whom we owe so much, was seen showing the film on a projector. Kathryn Crosby was briefly interviewed too and all in all it was a very nice item which I was delighted to show at the Leeds meeting. Robert was also interviewed on the DayBreak USA radio show on September 28 and had a useful 8 minute spot with Scott West which enabled him to plug the new DVD and CD releases apart from discussing the baseball film. The story was also featured on the nationwide CBS radio news at 8:00 am and 9:00 am (eastern time) on the morning of Friday, September 24th, which included a snatch of "White Christmas" and the lead-in that "...although Bing Crosby is usually remembered for his Christmas songs, he also was a great sportsman and..."

Robert Bader popped up again on October 5 on the Dennis Miller Show broadcast over the Net. Miller is from Pittsburgh and he was particularly interested in the baseball film find. Dennis told Robert that "Bing was, next to Sinatra, the greatest set of pipes ever." This gave Robert the perfect opportunity to plug the new CD "Bing sings the Sinatra Songbook." He also mentioned that the session tapes from Sinatra's 1954 appearances on Bing's GE show are of excellent quality.

The original New York Times item was their most e-mailed article in the week beginning September 25. The newspaper had a follow-up about the baseball film on October 2.)

Postscript to Crosby's Wine Cellar Treasure

The discovery of a copy of the broadcast of Game 7 of the 1960 World Series in Bing Crosby's former wine cellar led some readers to raise an interesting question: if Major League Baseball owns the copyright to World Series broadcasts, why did it have to pay the Crosby estate for the rights to televise the game on the MLB Network in December and release a DVD?

Matt Bourne, a spokesman for M.L.B., said that baseball's contract with NBC at the time granted the game's copyright to the office of the baseball commissioner.

So what did baseball buy that it did not own?

"We purchased from the Bing Crosby estate what we understand is the only physical copy of the game," Bourne said. The Crosby estate "maintains possession" of the five kinescope reels made of the game, he added, but "cannot exploit them for commercial gain and cannot sell them for additional copies to anyone else."

Only baseball will benefit financially from the DVD

sales, Bourne said.

Philip Hochberg, a Washington-based sports and communications lawyer, said in an e-mail: "Baseball in essence bought access to the sole copy and is now going to air and copyright the telecast on MLB Network, which will actually be something different than what Crosby owned (because of the various additional elements which will go into the telecast)."

Bob Costas is to host the presentation of the game and will presumably interview some of the participants.

Richard Sandomir

(Editor: Brian O'Neill, writing in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, also had interesting things to say on October 3.)

When savoring film of Bucs' game 7, credit Bing with save

Plenty of baseball fans leave the room when they get too nervous about a ballgame. Bing Crosby, who was a part-owner of the Pirates in 1960, went a little farther.

He left for Europe.

"Bing liked to be casual," his widow, Kathryn Crosby, explained the other day when recalling how the couple spent Oct. 13 that year. "He didn't like to get his soul wrapped around the situation, and he knew the French were cool. If things didn't go our way, he could suffer in silence."

So the Crosbys and friends listened on short wave in a Paris apartment. When Bill Mazeroski hit the home run to win the series for the Pirates, Der Bingle bungled. He tapped a Scotch bottle against the mantel and "started a conflagration.

"For a man who's supposed to be really cool," Mrs. Crosby said, "he lost it completely."

We were talking because a kinescope of the famous game seven, which hasn't been seen in 50 years, was found in what had been the wine cellar of the Crosby home outside San Francisco. That since has been conveyed to the MLB Network, which plans to show the game in its entirety in November at a yet-to-be named Pittsburgh theater. The veterans of that game and other celebrities will be there to discuss it, and the resulting program will be broadcast on MLB sometime in December.

The Crosbys may be a show biz family, but they've been floored by the reaction to this find. Bing's daughter, Mary, urged me not to say anything more about the Crosby home other than that it is "outside San Francisco."

"We don't want thousands of people to come to the basement to see what else is in it," she said.

Some will remember Mary as the actress who shot J.R. Ewing in "Dallas" in the 1980s, but I wanted only to know about growing up the daughter of this Pirates owner. (She must have cried like a baby whenever the Pirates lost in 1960. She was only a year old.)

"I'm the only girl out of six boys," she said. "So Dad didn't really know what to do with me. He taught me how to hunt, fish and play baseball. I am, to this day, a hopeless tomboy."

She has fond memories of pickup games her father would organize when they vacationed in Baja California, Mexico. The natives and Crosbys all played together, and her father would fiddle with a short-wave radio to pick up ballgames at night.

Her father never watched any of the movies he starred in, but she expects he watched the Mazeroski game more than once. Kathryn Crosby said that when she and Bing returned home from France, they watched the kinescope a California company had made at his request and "we both went crazy again."

Then the kinescope was forgotten. Mr. Crosby died in 1977, still a part-owner of the Pirates.

Robert Bader, vice president of marketing and production for Bing Crosby Enterprises, found it around Christmastime last year. He was rummaging through the archives in the climate-controlled part of the Crosby basement, looking to find more Crosby music and television to release on CD and DVD. Then he came across these loose reels that said, "World Series, Part 1 and Part 2."

He played all five reels to make sure he had the whole game. Before long, they ended up on DVD—at three different facilities.

"If something leaked out, it was just going to be a couple of innings," Mr. Bader said. "Things have a way of getting on YouTube."

But the historic game was kept intact. Nathaniel Crosby, 48, Bing's youngest son, said, "It's amazing to me that baseball didn't have a copy."

He intends to be at the Pittsburgh event. Nathaniel used to sit on the Pirates bench, in full uniform with Roberto Clemente's No. 21 on his back, when the team played in San Francisco's Candlestick Park. He was also on the Pirates bench when Nellie Briles shut down the Baltimore Orioles on two hits in the 1971 World Series.

He's seen Pirates manager Danny Murtaugh spit massive wads of tobacco after tough losses, and he saw his father have many long conversations in Spanish with Clemente, but, like so many in Pittsburgh, he can't wait to see this game that was played before he was born.

Nobody's seen that since the Eisenhower administration.

Brian O'Neill

Bing in Burlingame

Members will know that the wine cellar was in Bing's home in Hillsborough, which adjoins Burlingame in California. The Burlingame Historical Society website has a bulletin board and a number of local residents have added their comments about Bing. David Lobosco

spotted the site and drew our attention to it. Here is a selection of the postings on the board.

Ah...Bing Crosby. In the mid 60's he'd frequently be seen walking on Vancouver up to the Hillsborough golf course with his son Harry. That was a pretty long walk from his house actually. We would wave and nod, and he'd also nod with a little smile. But we knew not to follow him or anything. Once I even went into his property (gates weren't even locked during the day then!) and played for a while with his young daughter. There were 4 or 5 German Shepherds in cages but they didn't seem too mean if you didn't get up to them and taunt them. Soon the nanny got sight of me with his daughter and Harry and she shuffled them indoors. They were watched carefully, but there weren't any guards or locked gates! But I knew I probably shouldn't have just walked up the hill to their house even though I was 9 or ten.

Then years later I worked in a hospital lab and Bing would come in time to time for blood work and sing us a little tune and I'd be so shy, but staying very professional, I didn't even ask him for an autograph! I regret that now! He was just one of us, and often on TV, when asked where he lived now he'd say 'Burlingame' even though he technically lived in Hillsborough. His house was up on Easton towards the left fork up the hill. Yes those where the days.
(Kathryn, May 8, 2005)

In the mid sixties we used to go up to his mansion trick or treating on Halloween. I'm surprised he put up with that but it was his butler who answered the door and gave us the candy!
(Barbara Wright, January 24, 2007)

Here's my two cents. I grew up on Easton, a few blocks north of Vancouver. I have memories of going to Bing's house on Halloween and they gave out whole Hershey bars with almonds, that was something huge in my day. My father got rear ended by Bing once (very lightly) at the intersection of Easton, Vancouver and Jackling, no damage, just a very polite Bing apologizing. My father also used to see him frequenting a local pub, The Prince of Wales in San Mateo, adjacent to Bay Meadows race track which he frequented. My brother caddied for Kathryn, but not Bing. I feel fortunate of having the Crosby's as neighbors.
(Tim G, March 20, 2007)

I remember going up to his place on Halloween too. Full size candy bars.....we used to switch costumes outside his house so we could go back and get more.
(Lysle C, April 23, 2008)

Okay...I have two memories...one which I myself was a part of and the other, my mom.

1st: My mom, back around the early 70's (guessing), started working for Wells Fargo Bank in Burlingame. She was on her 1st week or so working as a teller when a man came to her window, leaned in on his arm, hat on his head and asked: Can you get my statement for me, please? The name is Crosby...well, my mom just stood and stared, unable to move. Her boss came over and took care of the request. After a minute or so my mom recovered enough to ask for his autograph. He chatted with my mom while waiting and asked her if she had children. When my mom told him she had eight, he repeated: EIGHT? and asked her to name them. She was very nervous but did. Meeting him made my mom's day, that's for sure. OH, and my mom later learned from one of the ladies she worked with that Mr. Crosby had a habit of going to the new tellers. Apparently he liked getting them all rattled.

This next story took place (back in the 70's) one Sunday after church. My then husband and his mom and sister and I went to Ken's Pancake House (I believe it was Ken's), on El Camino Real in Millbrae. The hostess stopped us before taking us to the back room to tell us that Bing Crosby and his family were all having breakfast and that he had requested not to be disturbed. Sure enough we were seated only a couple tables away and saw them all sitting around the table having breakfast. Kinda cool, I think.
(Linda, November 4, 2007)

A neighbor of mine on Cabrillo had two great Bing stories to tell. She used to shop on Broadway and walk home with her groceries. Bing's driver would sometimes pick her up and give her a ride home. One day she invited him in for tea and of course her family never believed her!!

He was a member of Our Lady of Angels parish and sometimes attended Midnight Mass at Christmas. One year he sang 'Silent Night' and made the night for everyone. His last home with Kathryn is at Jackling—she is there very infrequently now.
(Chris, January 7, 2008)

As an Altar boy at Our Lady of Angels Church, I saw the Crosby family often at Mass. One Sunday, my whole family attended Mass and the Crosby family sat in the pew behind us. Mr. Crosby sang all the hymns, as did his entire family. It was an incredible experience to hear his voice belt out the tunes that we had to memorize at school.

And indeed, Bing love to walk. I saw him several

times walking around in many different Burlingame areas using a golf club like a cane. I never bothered him, on my mother's advice (orders) in respect of his privacy. Bing always would nod or wave and seemed so comfortable walking the streets of Burlingame.
(Cal, January 29, 2008)

It was in the grocery store on Broadway where my two year old daughter patted Bing on the backside and with a huge smile said "Hi man". He turned, smiled and tapped her on the head and said "Hi Sweetie". We then discussed dog foods. He was a true gentleman.
(Joan L, January 30, 2008)

In September of 1976, I had just become an altar boy at Our Lady of Angels. As a newbie, I was assigned to work the 7am mass as it was both sparsely attended and the more senior altar boys seemingly got the choicer gigs. It was my very first time. Unlike most every other altar boy, I was extraordinarily nervous about screwing up to say nothing about how odd it was for me to be awake that early on a Sunday. The priest was Father Donal, a somewhat young and playful priest by the standards of the time. He seemed more amused by my nervous condition than anything else. When it came time to offer our neighbors peace (via handshakes) he instructed me whisperingly to leave the altar and to go down and shake hands with the people in the front row.

It was a very unusual request but I followed it to a tee. Glancing over to the left side of the church, I saw my family friends in the front row, the Spaneks. I knew I couldn't approach them for fear they would snicker or heckle me in some way. So, instead, I brazenly headed to the front pew at the right side of the Church. There stood a kindly old man in a hat standing by a younger man—who I took to be his son. As I trudged toward the old man, I began to think that based upon the hat he was wearing, that he must have been some sort of fisherman. As my cherubic little hand shook his, he let loose with a melodious "Peace be with you".

WHAM!

It was only hearing the voice that I instantly recognized him as Bing Crosby. I released my handshake before my entire body could nervously shake. He was very warm and friendly but seemingly in on some joke I wasn't privy to. As he continued smiling down at me, his son slapped him on the back as though he was being some sort of great sport. Stoically and in awe, I turned and scampered back up onto the altar. Father Donal was acting as though I had somehow gone down there on my own with a look of sly befuddlement. As a result, intermittent giggling had erupted in the Church. The mass continued without a hitch and I managed to stay out of trouble for the remainder even though I was ribbed mercilessly afterward by everyone in attendance. But in retrospect, I was glad to have been set up if only for the wonderful memory it brings back whenever I hear Bing's voice every Christmas season.
(Chris Ritter, March 23, 2008)

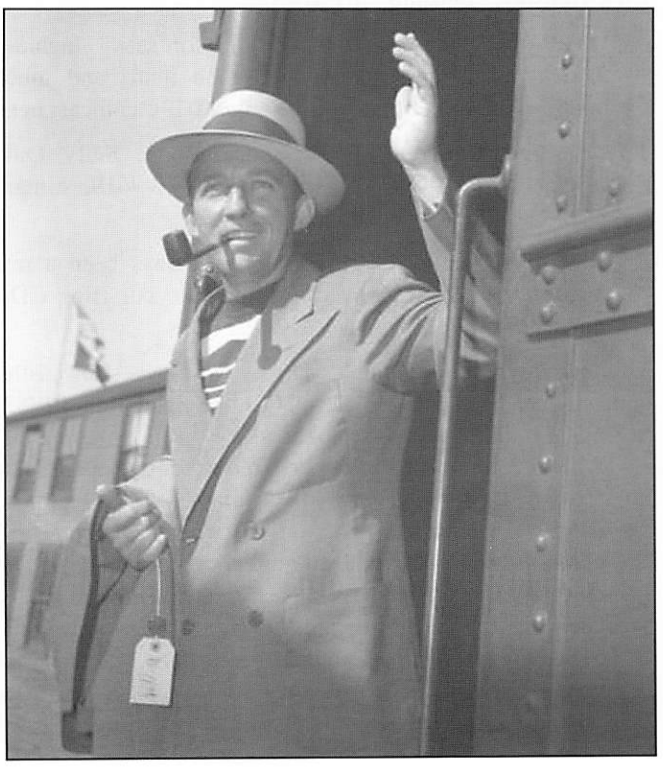
I grew up on the 1300 block of Bernal basically around the corner from his Jackling house. I remember many encounters with Bing. One in particular was Halloween, the gate was open at the house and my grandpa was with me, I did not want to go up the drive way but grandpa talked me into it and were we glad we did. We rang the door bell and Bing answered the door. He greeted us with a hello and a smile told us to wait right where we were. When he came back he had an Ice Cream Cone for each of us. Then he thanked us for coming. The best part of this memory is how excited my grandpa was because he got to shake Bing Crosby's hand.
(Lisa M. August 26, 2008)

I took time off from San Francisco State and worked full-time for the Burlingame Post Office—sometimes as Special Delivery driver. I would occasionally take items to Bing's Hillsborough house, and he might come out in his morning robe and loafers, whistling (like his records)!! I have permanent mental film clips of extraordinary face-to-face, hand-to-hand visits with our most famous guy!!
(Ron Jensen, January 17, 2010)

What lovely memories! There can't be many top celebrities who acted so normally in those days.

And talking of Bing's houses, his first home was in Tacoma and Joyce Lundberg kindly sent us a cutting from the *News Tribune* of August 6 last showing Bing returning to sing in a war bond show. The photo was accompanied by this caption.

Bing Crosby arrives at Tacoma's Union Station in early August 1942 to help out with World War II bond sales in the town of his birth. Harry Lillis Crosby was born in Tacoma in May 1903 when his family lived at 1112 North J Street. While in town with a USO troupe to entertain the soldiers at Fort Lewis, he graciously agreed to headline a show on August 6th at 12 noon at the Liberty Center in an effort to promote bond sales. The Paramount Studios star sang a number of popular songs. Also appearing were Hollywood comedians Phil Silvers and Rags Ragland. The Tacoma local of the Boilermakers union were noted as buying $50,000 worth of war bonds.



TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series of CDs remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $16.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has recently obtained, from the original printer, a supply of the book "Alternate Bing Crosby" by Colin Pugh which was published in 1988. Running to 159 pages, it gives details of the many alternate takes Bing made. If you would like a copy, send £3.50 to Michael Crampton. Europe and Ireland members should send £4.50. Also Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal figure. There are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances and Michael is offering these at the hugely discounted price of only £5.99 including postage.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video.

Rick Hensley, Flushing, MI, USA

1940s thru 90s Bing memorabilia for sale. Includes books, magazines, records, fan club items and much more. Email me for a full list, alias1029@comcast.net.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, contact Ray.

Michael Reynolds, 41 Naples Drive, Westlands, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire ST5 2QD, England (tel: 01782-618995, e-mail: mjreynold@aol.co.uk)

A few volumes of my father, Fred's, set of books **"The Crosby Collection"** are still available. They appraise Bing's commercial recordings one by one in chronological order with the intention of being fair and objective. Interspersed yearly are historical notes. Comprehensive indexes are included, overall in volume 5. They are hardbacks about A5 in size. Scarcity of volume No.1 dictates that it should go only as part of a full set. Prices shown approximate to those charged originally when the books were produced in sequence during the 1990s. They exclude postage and packing whose cost can be advised for agreement before carrying out each order but work on not more than £2 each (vols.1,2 and 3) and £3 each (vols. 4 and 5), less in aggregate for quantity, within the UK. Half of net proceeds is for the I.C.C. Three or more secures the bonus of another hardback (of 184 pages, non-Bing) being a detective story by the same author - solvable by the reader, he assured me, but I failed! Otherwise £3 plus p & p.

Volume 1	269 recordings	1926 to 1934	224 pages	£6
Volume 2	281	1935 to 1941	247	£8
Volume 3	436	1942 to 1950	317	£10
Volume 4	519	1951 to 1960	382	£12
Volume 5	359	1961 to 1977	358	£14

or all 5 volumes for £47 (excluding vol.1, £41).

Also there is just one copy of his films book, **"Road to Hollywood"** for sale; A5 hardback of 331 pages; foreword by Bing who also called it a "marvellous compilation"; revised and enlarged edition 1986; £10 plus £3 p & p (UK); half net proceeds for I.C.C.

Alternatively make an offer which, if less, will be held for later consideration.

(Editor: These are wonderful books which are a must for the really keen Crosby enthusiast. By the way, I couldn't solve the detective story either!)

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for CDs imported from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia. (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. In August, the Crosby film was *Two for Tonight* supported by the Dick Powell film *Hollywood Hotel* (1938). The October film night featured *The Starmaker*, the *Cooling It* TV show and the Sennett short *I Surrender Dear*. The film night still to come this year is on December 7 at Mamma Vittoria's, 343 Smith St. (1st floor), Fitzroy, Victoria.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and clips from Bing's films. A Bing Crosby Encyclopedia is planned for the site in due course.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Information taken from the book *Bing Crosby: Day By Day* is posted frequently.

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material, some of which used to be on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Maintained by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

The Bing Crosby Free Speech Fan Forum

Set up by Steve Fay, this site has a wide varying discussion group. Go to:
http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyForum

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://lakeprovidencegirl.com/bing.html
This is an impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

Books 'n' Bing

Warning Shadows: Home Alone with Classic Cinema

By Gary Giddins, published by W. W. Norton & Company, New York-London; (2010), Paperback, 416 pages, $18.95. ISBN-10: 0393337928 ISBN-13: 978-0393337921

Gary Giddins, biographer of the first 37 years of Bing Crosby's life, devotes his 11th book to motion pictures. It is as perceptive, stimulating and informative as his previous writing on jazz and musical personalities—and that is saying a lot.

He challenges directors, stars, bit players and behind-the-screen experts. He speaks his mind: Gregory Peck had a "nobly uneven" career; in *Higher and Higher*, Mel Torme sang like the hoarse, high-pitched Sterling Holloway; *Mammy* (1930) was Al Jolson's best film; in all circumstances, Jimmy Durante was great; *The Third Man* can fairly be called a perfect film; Joan Crawford's bad acting in one movie could morph into an incandescent performance in another.

Giddins is reacting to films, recent and ancient, released on DVDs between 2005 and 2009. He wrote about them as-they reached him, and has added sharp editing and a lengthy introduction on world movie history. When he can, he clusters the pictures— fantasy, horror, musicals, comedy, crime, war and so on. He offers fresh perspectives on celebrated films and enjoys hidden beauties in neglected ones. He is provocative, witty and often wise.

As a measure of the range of the book, its main title is borrowed from a 1923 German Expressionist film made in Berlin and directed by Arthur Robison, an American living there. To start, Giddins carries the reader from a lone viewer peering into Edison's Kinetoscope through the huge movie palaces built in the 1920s and the remaining multiplexes to (again) a lone viewer staring at a large flat-screen TV playing a DVD in his living room.

In the middle of all this, Bing Crosby takes a bow. One of the DVDs that came Giddins' way was the so-called Screen Legends package of five 1937-1944 Crosby efforts. Giddins brushes aside three made at Paramount, although properly crediting Bing's spirited singing of "Smarty" in *Double or Nothing*. The two films produced at Universal are more to Giddins' taste. He credits *East Side of Heaven* with a splendid cast (Bing included.)

He seems particularly taken with the highly entertaining *If I Had My Way* (1940), and its climactic presentation of several old-time vaudeville players. He rates Crosby as "thoroughly appealing." He finds Eddie Leonard's singing of "Ida" to be magical, and accepts his performance in blackface as "too much a part of historical ritual to offend."

That does not assert sympathy for other blackface performers, including Crosby. Giddins is severely unhappy with Bing's "weakness for blackface" and his blackened-up duet of "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive" with "dim-bulb Sonny Tufts." That was in *Here Come the Waves* (1944), an intended recruiting film in an era of a racially-segregated military. By the next year or so, the movie moguls had concluded—very late—that blackface had to be phased out.

Sonny Tufts and Bing eliminate the negative in *Here Come the Waves*

In various sections of his book, Giddins is appropriately critical of Hollywood's insistence on forcing black comics—Mantan Moreland, Willie Best, and others—to perform with eye-rolling clownishness and garbled speech, or go without work. Usefully, Giddins does recall one actor, and leader in the black community. Clarence Muse "played the usual retinue of porters and butlers ... without the slightest degree of servility."

Muse had roles in almost 150 movies. He handled a passing bit in one Crosby film and a larger role, singing with Bing, in a second, *Riding High* (1950). Watch for him in *Safe in Hell* (1932) or any other Muse film.

One demerit in the book: Giddins insists on calling Ronald Colman "Coleman." That must be the unaware work of a 20-year-old proof reader. After all, Colman played prominent roles in films for 40 years and it is fair to call him a major star.

Giddins' essays are limited in one respect: he has to start with those DVDs issued during the years in which he wrote about them. He begins there. He goes on. Anyone interested in movies will find much to relish and debate in "Warning Shadows."

Bob Achorn

The Party of the Decade

Martin McQuade explains all.

Bing Crosby always favored working with illustrious pianists; a case in point was Eddy Duchin, the personification of musical elegance and taste. They first shared the bill at the Capitol Theater in New York in the early thirties. Both also played at the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-40. During Crosby's final season on NBC's Kraft Music Hall, from February 7 to May 9, 1946, Duchin was featured on instrumental passages punctuating the host's renditions of "I Can't Begin to Tell You," "There's a Small Hotel" (a rehearsal of which was issued on V-Disc), "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "You Are Too Beautiful," and "Beautiful Love." Along with trading some brisk repartee, Bing also spotlighted Duchin's virtuosity by inviting him 'to beat it to the Baldwin" and perform sparkling solo performances, along with John Scott Trotter's Orchestra, on each of these programs.

In between two of these weekly broadcasts, Bing experienced an unforgettable evening when Eddy Duchin, along with Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, and John McClain (columnist for the old Hearst syndicate), held what would become known as" the party of the decade." Duchin's son Peter, who inherited his father's mantle as high society's favorite pianist and band leader, recounted the details of this sumptuous soiree in his 1996 autobiography *A Ghost of a Chance* (Random House, co-authored by Charles Michener).

"Whenever I ran into Cary over the years, he would refer to that night as 'the best party I've ever given.' Knowing how tight Cary was with a buck, I imagine it might have been the only party he'd ever given. According to one account, my father - also famously tight with a buck – had initially suggested serving hot dogs and baked beans. Thanks to the restaurateur Mike Romanoff, who offered to cater the affair, the menu improved considerably."

A publicity photo for Eddy Duchin.

"On March 24, 1946, a telegram flew around the country: WE FIGURE IT'S ABOUT TIME WE THREW A PARTY, SO WILL YOU COME TO THE OLD CLOVER CLUB, 8477 SUNSET BOULEVARD, 8 PM, NEXT SATURDAY, MARCH 30TH. SORRY ABOUT THE SHORT NOTICE BUT WE'VE ONLY JUST BEEN ABLE TO HIRE THE JOINT. PLEASE ANSWER EARLY. WE ARE NERVOUS. BLACK TIE. LOW CUT DRESSES. ARDMORE 8-6056.

EDDY DUCHIN, CARY GRANT, JOHN MCCLAIN AND JIMMY STEWART."

"The guest list conjures up the whole era: the Fred Astaires, the Vincent Astors, Lew Ayres, the Richard Barthelmesses, Constance Bennett, the Jack Bennys, the Edgar Bergens, the Frederick Brissons (Rosalind Russell), the Humphrey Bogarts, the Frank Capras, Lady Adele Cavendish (Adele Astaire), the Charles Chaplins, the Gary Coopers, Joan Crawford, **the Bing Crosbys,** George Cukor, Olivia de Haviland, the Douglas Fairbanks, Jrs., Geraldine Fitzgerald, the Henry Fondas, Joan Fontaine, Kay Francis, Clark Gable, Lillian Gish, the Samuel Goldwyns, the Averell Harrimans, the Rex

Harrisons, the Howard Hawkes, the Leland Haywards, Rita Hayworth, William Randolph Hearst, Mark Hellinger, Sonja Henie, the Alfred Hitchcocks, the Bob Hopes, Hedda Hopper, John Houseman, Howard Hughes, John Huston, Barbara Hutton, Van Johnson, the Danny Kayes, Sir Alexander Korda, the Mervyn LeRoys, Anita Loos, Ida Lupino, the Fred MacMurrays, the Herman J. Mankiewiczes, the Harpo Marxes, the Zeppo Marxes, Elsa Maxwell, Louis B. Mayer, the Ray Millands, the Robert Montgomerys, the George Murphys, David Niven, the Gregory Pecks, Cole Porter, the Tyrone Powers, Otto Preminger, the Basil Rathbones, the Hal Roaches, the Edward G. Robinsons, Cesar Romero, the Randolph Scotts, David O. Selznick, Irene Mayer Selznick, Ann Sheridan, Toots Shor, the Frank Sinatras, Sam Spiegel, the Spencer Tracys, Lana Turner, the Walter Wangers, the Jack Warners, the Lew Wassermans, Clifton Webb, the John Hay Whitneys, the Keenan Wynns, the Darryl Zanucks."

"The four hosts, all dressed in tails, formed a receiving line. Mike Romanoff's food ranged from green turtle soup to oysters, crab, shrimp, trout, chicken, stuffed turkey, roast ribs of beef, ham, coq au vin, boned squab, vegetables and salads, and numerous desserts. At five in the morning, 250 guests were still there, sitting on the floor and listening to Bing Crosby sing every song he ever knew, to the accompaniment of Hoagy Carmichael."

One can imagine eight year old Peter learning the next day about how Bing held captive this insanely super – stellar audience; and marveling while his dad and Bing withstood the preparations and rigors of yet another live radio show just a few days after this rollicking – and marathon - celebration.

The prevention of such schedule overloads was one of the motivating factors behind Bing imminently leaving NBC to launch his magnetic tape revolution over at fledgling ABC. Eddy Duchin and his Orchestra, along with the Nat "King" Cole Trio, took over the Kraft Music Hall as replacements during the summer of 1946, just prior to Al Jolson taking over the helm in the fall.

Upon Eddy Duchin's death at age 41 from acute leukemia, Bing maintained a friendship with his son throughout the years. In 2006, at the 50th anniversary gala for *High Society* in Newport, Peter spoke to me of their lasting rapport. "My dear friend Bing. I would do anything for him. I remember so many good times with him, particularly wonderful fishing trips." Peter cordially wrote me a note upon receiving a compilation of his father's memorable work with Bing. "Their music together is just wonderful – but then again Bing was a wonderful person."

Martin McQuade

The 'novel' Bing spans the generations

The Crosby history suggests that Bing, like almost all star performers, yearned to gain full control of his working environment, the songs that he sang (post-Jack Kapp) and the characters that he agreed to play. He usually succeeded, for better or worse. A minor exception came when his name was drafted by popular novelists for cameo appearances in their books. The writers were in control.

One example: John Steinbeck found a place for Bing in his classic 1939 novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." Steinbeck imagined a hamburger stand on Route 66 with an early jukebox near the door. "The nickel phonograph with records piled up like pies, ready to swing out to the turntable and play dance music, 'Tipi-ti-pi-tin.' 'Thanks for the Memory,' Bing Crosby, Benny Goodman."

"The other man puts a nickel in the phonograph, watches the disk slip free and the turntable rise up under it. Bing Crosby's voice—golden. Thanks for the memory of sunburn at the shore—You might have been a headache but you never were a bore..."

Actually, such a recording was fictional. Steinbeck may have heard Bing sing "Thanks for the Memory" on radio in 1938, no doubt at Paramount Studio's urging, but Bing didn't record the song until years later. But fiction does not demand veracity.

Bing was mentioned in a few novels, including a murder mystery, over the years. And here he is back again in 2010.

Elizabeth George's latest mystery, "This Body of Death," spent several weeks on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

Ms. George created a cranky character named James Dague, proprietor of a London coin shop. When did he see a missing character in the story?

Dague: "It would have been round Christmas, give or take two weeks in either direction. Unlike some establishments, we don't keep our decorations up all that long. We all of us loathe them, to be honest. Along with the carols. Bing Crosby may dream of snow. I, for one, dream of strangling Bing Crosby at the end of one week, having to listen to him."

This 2010 notice is not so kind as that of 1939. But the name is spelled right. And how many performers linger in the public consciousness for 71 years, so that readers will immediately understand what the author is talking about? And on both sides of the Atlantic?

Bing and very few others, I would guess.

Bob Achorn

BING AND THOSE '70s SESSIONS

It's a delight to hear from Ken Barnes as he tells us more!

In the last issue of BING, I was interested to read Reg Bristo's on-the-spot impressions of Bing's February 26th, 1975 London session at Chappell's studio in Bond Street. Alas, like Bing, neither Reg nor the studio are with us today. But there was an immediacy about Reg's report that has prompted me to fill in some of the gaps and tell the story from my side of the glass.

This was the last of six morning sessions that Bing did between February 19th and the 26th accompanied by the Pete Moore Orchestra with myself as supervising producer.

Actually, it was our seventh session with Bing. The first had taken place in Los Angeles on October 17th, 1974 with Johnny Mercer at Mercer's own studio in Burbank. On that occasion, Bing and Johnny sang two tracks from Mercer's recently composed score – music by Andre Previn – for the musical of J. B. Priestley's "The Good Companions" accompanied only by a rhythm section. But what a rhythm section it was! – Jimmy Rowles (piano), Barney Kessel (guitar), Joe Mondragon (bass) and Alvin Stoller (drums). They played bare-bones versions of Pete Moore's arrangements to which we later added the orchestra in London. The first "The Pleasure of Your Company" got the full orchestral treatment at the end of the first London session on February 19th. The second "Good Companions / And Points Beyond" medley with the smaller orchestra (just 8 strings, woodwind, trumpet and rhythm) was recorded at the end of the following session, February 20th. The results were excellent but the only sad thing was that, because of Musicians Union rules, we were compelled to "wipe" the American rhythm section and replace it with British musicians. Happily – with Ronnie Price (piano/keyboards), Jud Proctor (guitar), Russ Stapleford (bass) and Alf Bigden (drums) – the difference was not at all noticeable.

Our original plan was to record only one album – and in London – but during the October session, Bing – obviously enjoying himself in the company of Mercer, Pete and myself – approached me and said "Say, Ken, since I'm coming to London to record, how would it be if I recorded TWO albums? That would make the trip worthwhile." The people at U.A. were delighted at the idea. So we quickly made plans to choose more material. The choice, this time, was Bing's. He wanted to do a set of Broadway standards that he had never before recorded – songs by the likes of Porter, Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart etc. Also some more recent show tunes if anything likely presented itself. We finally agreed on 14 songs instead of the normal 12.

Bing and Ken Barnes rehearse a song for the later album with Fred Astaire.

This involved a lot of extra preparation – and a mountain of scoring work for Pete – but we finally agreed on recording dates to be in London around the second week of February. I had scheduled a total of six sessions with Bing recording four songs per session plus the two orchestral overdubs. Those who are familiar with my book "The Crosby Years" (Elm Tree Books/Hamish Hamilton. 1980) will be aware of the vast amount of correspondence and phone calls that passed between Bing and myself – especially some of the letters which were reprinted in the book.

In one of these letters – dated February 8th, 1975, Bing wrote in part:

"From what I've heard on the cassettes, it seems to me the whole chore should go along very smoothly, without any problems. The songs are good. I think Pete does wonderful work with the arrangements and you've allotted certainly enough time to do them all.

Maybe after the first session, you might want to do a little more on each session. I just did an album here, and I did six songs quite easily on a three hour session. Of course, it was a small group and wasn't quite as intricate as it would be with a large band.

…….. "Perhaps we can just see how it goes and if on the first session we find we have time, throw in another one if it's ready, and for this purpose maybe Pete can see that he always has a standby number to be knocked off if time allows."

(I did phone Bing and explained to him that the orchestral balance was just as essential to the quality of the album as the vocals and four songs per session would

still bring the project in on budget. He readily agreed to my reasoning.)

Later, in that same letter, he added.

"One further note. I do hope you'll avoid any news release about my being there and that when we're recording, the studio will be absolutely clear of everybody except those directly connected with the recording itself – and I include the Control Room.

Just you and Pete, the engineer, the band and myself. I find I get a lot more done that way, in a lot less time.

When the sessions are concluded – maybe the last day or so – we can have some of the Fan Club people in and play some of the records for them, or I'll sing a couple for them if the band is still there. Maybe at the conclusion of the session.

It's just not possible for me to concentrate and get the work done when there are people watching from all sorts of vantage points.

.....I know I sound like I'm a matinee idol or something, but for some reason or other, when I'm working there in London, I'd just like to be undisturbed.

All best wishes to you and Pete and your staff.

As ever

Bing Crosby

Bing arrived at Heathrow Airport on the morning of February 18th with little more than 24 hours to spare before plunging into that very heavy recording schedule. He came without any entourage and was cheerful when Pete and I picked him up and dropped him off at Claridges at 8.30 am.

"When do we get together to rehearse?" he asked.

"Well, you'd better get as much sleep as you can," I said. "We'll call for you in about 12 hours – say 8.30 tonight."

"I don't need that much sleep," he said causally. "This is midnight my time. If I get to bed now, you fellas can pick me up here about 4.30 this afternoon. Then, let's find a piano someplace and get to work."

Pete Moore and I looked at each other in amazement. Alan Warner of United Artists shook his head in disbelief.

When 4.30 arrived, Bing was waiting for us at the front door of Claridges, chatting with the commissionaire. We walked around the corner to Chappells in Bond Street where Teddy Holmes had kindly lent us his office, which had a piano, and we got straight into rehearsal. Bing sang his way through all of the 24 songs that would be recorded over the ensuing six sessions. He was in good spirits, showing no sign of jet-lag and sailed through each of the songs – even the unfamiliar ones – with the ease of a man drinking a cup of tea. We worked continuously for two hours, after which he glanced at his watch and said "I don't believe I'll do any more tonight. I'd best be getting back to the hotel and get rested for tomorrow."

On our way out I invited Bing to take a quick look at the studio where he would be recording the next day. Our engineer, John Timperley, was there to meet us and he showed Bing where he would be placing the strings, brass, rhythm, percussion, etc.

Bing nodded his approval. Then John pointed to the vocal booth. "And there, Mr. Crosby," said John "Is where you'll be singing."

Bing's cheerful expression faded and he began to look severe. He shook his head and said "I don't want to work in a booth. That's like working to a track. I want to be with the band. I didn't come seven thousand miles to sing to a pane of glass."

John, always a conscientious engineer, explained that with such a large orchestra there would be separation problems if Bing were to sing in the same studio area.

"I don't see how," Bing replied calmly. "If it was possible for me to record with a full orchestra 40 years ago, why should it be any different today?"

"But, Mr. Crosby," John protested. "The brass can get awfully loud."

On his way out of the studio, Bing turned and looked briefly at John and said simply "Then I'll get louder."

The next morning, as the musicians came into the studio and took their places in the various sections, not knowing what the job was, our orchestral contractor, Jack Greenstone was so delighted to meet and shake hands with Bing that he decided to address the orchestra before we started work.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Today's session is going to be very special. We have with us an artist who, in an unparalleled career, has brought pleasure to millions around the world. He is without doubt, the finest in his field. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bing Crosby."

As the orchestra – all 34 of them – applauded, our artist looked decidedly embarrassed and, as Jack turned and looked at him and said "Mr. Crosby, it's a pleasure to have you here in London," Bing simply added "I think we should begin by taking about 8 bars out of that introduction." The musicians roared with laughter and the sessions got off to a wonderful start.

While United Artists refrained from sending out press releases that Bing was in London for an extended set of recording sessions, the word leaked out and we were inundated with requests for interviews and news stories. And since the sessions proceeded so well, Bing did agree to a few brief interviews that helped spread the word. But it wasn't until the last day of recording that anyone was allowed into the studio. Bing's main concern on that day was for the loyal fans who had made the trip into London from various far-flung points of the U.K. Frank Murphy from Tyne and Wear, Leslie Gaylor from the Isle of Wight and Reg Bristo from Gwent, Wales to name only a few. We also had journalist, George Perry from the *Sunday Times*.

While Bing entertained his fans, I took Mr. Perry to

another part of the studio to tell him the whole background on how Bing came to be recording in London.

When I returned to the main studio, some of the fans asked me if I could arrange for Bing to pose for photos with them in the control room. Not realising that he had spent the last 20 minutes shaking hands and posing with everybody who had turned up, I asked him if he would come into the control room to have shots taken with Leslie, Reg and Frank and he said "I think that's enough photos for today, Ken." And, of course, he was right. He agreed to talk to George Perry but without any further photos. But we supplied Mr. Perry with a good session photo to accompany his article.

Bing at work in the Chappells studio.

As I said earlier, these sessions were covered in depth in my book. But what I didn't cover were the many discussions that Pete Moore and I had regarding the best way to present the famous voice. When I first knew that I was to produce these sessions, I made it a point to listen to as many of Crosby's most recent recordings as possible.

The one I spent most time with was the 1972 "Bing 'n' Basie" which, while it had some nice moments, revealed that Bing's vocal range was sadly impaired and lacking in volume. I should explain, at this point, that I do not regard a singer's vocal reach as a measure of his, or her, greatness. Billie Holiday's voice, for example, during the latter years of her young life spanned little more than an octave. Yet she could handle a rangy song like Cole Porter's "Easy to Love" by simply inverting the high notes – and sometimes the lower notes too. The results were magical and offered jazz singing at its purest. Bing, however, was rarely given to inverting notes and he would generally sing the songs as the composer intended. This sometimes revealed his limitations. I don't mean this as a criticism because I have always considered him to be a giant among song stylists. He always displayed immaculate pitch and incontestable time. But the passing years – particularly in the 1960s and early '70s – had shown a marked decline in his vocal powers

Yet when Pete and I had our first routining session with him, we discovered that his voice was, in fact, much bigger and louder than it appeared on the Basie album. I felt, at that point, that Bing should have sued the people who had been recording him in recent years by placing him so close to the microphone that he had been compelled to under sing. I made a note to place him at least 12 inches from the mike during our sessions.

As for his range, during rehearsals Pete tried placing him in different keys to establish his "tessitura" (his best workable range) and the results during the sessions showed the celebrated voice to be in better shape than many of his latter-day recordings suggested. Of course, these were the first recordings he had made since having a serious operation in which part of a lung had been removed. Whatever theories one may have about this, there is no question that his mid-1970s recordings were a vast improvement over previous sessions of the late '60s and early '70s.

The other decision I made was to ensure that the orchestrations should not sound as though they were written in the 1940s or '50s. An attitude with which both Bing and Pete Moore concurred. Well, we must have done something right because when Bing came back to London in July of that same year, I told him his album and his single of "That's What Life Is All About" were in the U.K. charts. He looked at me warily and said "Could I see some verification of that." I handed him the "Melody Maker" and there – at number 17 – in the singles chart was "Life." And, at 20 in the album chart was our first album. He smiled and nodded approvingly.

That was the beginning of a series of six albums that we recorded together. He also recorded four other albums for other labels during the last three years of his life, but none – I'm proud to say – was as commercially successful as the ones we did together.

The last album – "Seasons" – which may have been the best of the bunch was to be the first in a newly negotiated exclusive six-album deal with Polydor. Since leaving Decca in 1954, Bing had recorded for numerous labels on *ad hoc* basis and had shunned the idea of an exclusive contract. I pointed out to him that he had missed out on all the advantages of being linked with a single label and, during that last month of his life, he could see the wisdom of being part of a regular team. Alas, that was not to be.

As a final thought, it was Humphrey Bogart who once said to Frank Sinatra "The only thing you owe the public is a good performance." If this is true then Bing Crosby – along with Sinatra – certainly left us owing nothing. His legacy is still with us superb and intact to be enjoyed for always.

I am privileged to have been a small part of it.

Ken Barnes

Celluloid Crosby

I still play my Crosby vinyl albums where there is no CD equivalent. Some grace the turntable more often than others. One neglected LP is "Return to Paradise Islands". I don't think I have given it a spin in more than forty years. I did not regard it as a collection of Crosby vocals with accompaniment by Nelson Riddle. It was more a question of Crosby vs. Riddle. And then, as Ken Crossland rightly says in his "Keeping Track" article in BING 155, Robert Bader returned to the original master tapes and it is a much better proposition. I find myself enjoying an improved listening experience to that which the original Reprise album offered. A welcome reprise, in fact. Feeling in a Hawaiian mood my thoughts turned to Bing's filmic contribution America's fiftieth state. This is the result.

I want to make two comparisons in this article. Firstly, the productivity of superstars and then the people's choice of popular music versus that of music critics. For both comparisons 1936 is a significant year. It is a typical Crosby year in terms of his contribution to popular entertainment. Two days into that year he commenced hosting the hourly Kraft Music Hall broadcasts on NBC. These were based in Hollywood, a location that greatly assisted Bing's recording and filming schedules. In 1936 he cut around three dozen songs for Decca and he had three movies released. Those films were *Anything Goes, Rhythm on the Range* and *Pennies from Heaven.* Bing sustained that entertainment scheduling routine for well over a decade. It was not matched by any other entertainer.

Bing sings "Sweet Leilani" to a little Hawaiian child.

How do you define an entertainer who has attained superstar status? I say any entertainer who has been popular for more than seven years. Generally speaking, true stardom lasts no longer than that in showbusiness. Anyone who remains in the public eye for a longer period of time is entitled to be considered a *superstar.* In the categories of recording, radio and film Bing's only superstar rival pre-1950 was Frank Sinatra. When Elvis Presley emerged to change the face of popular music, Sinatra became one of a trio of twentieth century film and recording superstars. Yet Sinatra never had the Hollywood career that kept Bing on the big screen three or four times a year for nigh on twenty years. Sinatra's most productive Hollywood years occurred between 1955 and 1957. During that period he appeared in eleven features. It was in the 1960s that Elvis matched the recording and filming schedules of Crosby. By then radio was dead and Presley only dipped his toe in the water as far as television was concerned. Bing, however, substituted television for radio as a means of regularly entering the homes of the North American public. The Presley superstar tag was certainly applicable in 1961. In that year he made more than fifty studio recordings for RCA and the top grossing film in America was his eighth film, *Blue Hawaii.*

In November of 1936 Bing started filming *Waikiki Wedding.* A quarter of a century later Elvis began work on *Blue Hawaii.* Presley's Paramount film took its title from the Leo Robin-Ralph Rainger song that Bing duetted with Shirley Ross in *Waikiki Wedding.* The only other musical overlap between those two movies was "Aloha Oe". A chorus sang it in the 1936 film. Bing recorded a version for Decca in the summer of 1936 but the tie-in songs for the film were recorded in February and March of 1937. In March of 1961, Elvis recorded the vocals for his *Blue Hawaii* film It is interesting to study the conflicting composer credits for "Aloha Oe" because it reveals the reason why the Presley films achieved diminishing returns whilst Bing's box office take soared throughout the 'thirties and 'forties. For the *Waikiki Wedding* version of "Aloha Oe" Kennedy-Liliuokalani receive composer credit. With the Elvis version we find it is "arranged and adapted by Elvis Presley" and published by Elvis Presley Music. This tells us everything about the substandard musical contributions to Presley films which became progressively worse throughout the 1960s. Colonel Tom Parker wanted a cut from every song Presley recorded. Songwriters of merit refused to surrender their rights. Those who were blackmailed into giving the Presley music publishing arm a percentage were second league writers who composed such forgettable 1960s Elvis film songs as "Cotton Candy Land", "(There's) No Room to Rhumba in a Sports Car", "One Boy, Two Little Girls" and "Petunia the Gardener's Daughter". With few song chart hits and his films now being featured on double bills, Elvis's superstar status could have been called into question in the 1960s. It was eventually salvaged by a television comeback special which was followed by record breaking seasons in Las Vegas. Elvis made no more films in Hollywood.

The start of the Presley career revival more or less coincided with Bing's "Hey Jude" recording session, which proves superstars make bad judgments from time to time. In the case of Bing, it was Ken Barnes who provided the means for Crosby's return to top vocal form.

Back to 1936 for our second comparison. This is an easily measured comparison. It is the people's choice placed against critical evaluation. We have a perfect example in "Sweet Leilani". It is the most significant song from *Waikiki Wedding.* It provided Bing with his first million selling recording. It also provoked a tirade from BBC radio presenter Benny Green whenever he could slot in a reference to it being the Academy Award winning song of 1937. He thought the Gershwins had been robbed when "They Can't Take that Away from me" from *Swing Time* didn't take the Oscar that year. It wasn't just Benny and a few other musicologists who were surprised that "Sweet Leilani" won. When Irving Berlin presented the award at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles there was genuine audience surprise that the Gershwins' song didn't win.

So how come the Crosby song pipped the Astaire one? It was because the George and Ira song was too sophisticated for new voters admitted to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences poll. That year the Academy's president, Frank Capra, thought the fifty man nomination committee was too small to be representative. He ruled that members of the Screen Actors Guild should have a vote even though some may not be Academy members. Even extras were able to vote in the categories of Best Picture, Best Acting and Best Song categories. As a result, the number of eligible voters jumped from 800 to 15,000 with 12,000 of those votes being cast by film extras. So Bing's song won on a populist basis. The following year the Academy's rules were changed again. The extras could still vote for Picture and Acting awards but not for best song. So for one year only the Oscar for best song was decided by the people who laid out 35 cents for a 78 record.

Harry Owens' autobiography is titled "Sweet Leilani" and documents the birth of the song. He wrote the song on October 20th, 1934. That was the day following the birth of his first child - Leilani. It was several months before he realised the potential of his composition. He then arranged for sheet music copies of the song to be shipped from the printers in San Francisco to Honolulu, where he was in residence with his orchestra at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. The sheet music arrived on the S.S. Lurline on September 3rd, 1936. So, too, did Bing and Dixie. They were on a month's vacation during which time they met with Harry Owens and Bing became familiar with "Sweet Leilani". Owens

had previously met Bing towards the end of 1925. Brother Everett had pitched the vocal duo of Crosby and Rinker to Owens who gave them a tryout with his band. That led to nothing but Crosby and Owens met up again at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel over ten years later. According to Owens' autobiography, Bing's greeting was, "Hi, Harry, is this tryout night?"

But what was "Sweet Leilani" doing in a film for which Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger had been contracted by Paramount to supply songs? This is how Bing remembered events in his 1970 introduction to Owens book:

"I had spent about a month in Hawaii, and while there, I heard, among others, a lovely song called "Sweet Leilani". I was to start a picture called *Waikiki Wedding* on my return home, and I brought the song home with me, intent on using it in the picture, but the score for the film had already been written, and the producer was adamant in his refusal to try to squeeze in another one.

He had a point there, too, because the score, written for the picture by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin contained some lovely material. Such songs as "Blue Hawaii". I fought manfully for the inclusion of "Sweet Leilani", even to the point of walking off the picture for a day, and brooding at the golf course.

The song was already a hit in Honolulu and it didn't take any musical clairvoyant to discern that it would have similar success in the States. I finally won my point and the song was included in the picture, in a simple scene with a little Hawaiian child."

Perhaps there is a further comparison to be made here. The musical ear of the man about to record a million selling version of "Sweet Leilani" in early 1937 versus the cloth ear of Arthur Hornblow, Jr., the film's producer.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

WE'RE NOT DRESSING Film. This was the third production under Bing's contract with Paramount Pictures. It was shot over a seven week period during the early part of 1934. The shooting schedule included two weeks location filming. Several scenes were photographed on Catalina Island. This was a generous time scale at the time considering it was more of a domestic drama than an epic with a cast of hundreds, but Paramount set the project up to succeed in a big way. The studio made sure that the film would have a wide appeal by casting Carole Lombard, Ethel Merman, Leon Errol, Burns and Allen and Ray Milland in support. They dusted off the script of a previous hit, "Male and Female", which Cecil B. DeMille had filmed in 1919. That production was based on J.M. Barrie's "The Admirable Crichton", a strong story that would stand frequent revival. Norman Taurog, one of Paramount's respected directors of lightweight movies, was assigned to the film and Mack Gordon and Harry Revel were commissioned to write half a dozen songs suitable for Bing. Finally, the film was edited to a 77 minute running time. With all that talent and a timeless plot the film could not miss for either the studio or Bing. Which is why Bing made his debut on the list of top ten box office stars for 1934 in seventh place. When *We're Not Dressing* was given a release in the U.K. in the winter of 1934 it was supported by *Success at any Price*, a drama starring Douglas Fairbanks jnr. and Genevieve Tobin. That film was by no means a 'B' picture. Those were value for money days as far as moviegoing was concerned. If you saw the film when it received its Liverpool premiere at the Paramount cinema during the week commencing 12th November, 1934, you would have seen the two feature films, a newsreel and a stage show comprising Peggy Cochrane and the 16 Halliwell Girls performing rhythmic dances. Plus a playlet featuring Karino with Vadeo and Herbs called "An Episode of the East". And if you went early in the day you could probably get in for a tanner!

Carole Lombard tries to charm Bing in *We're Not Dressing*.

WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO BENSONHURST Song. Bing and Dick Stewart duetted this in the Sennett short *Billboard Girl* (1931). The two were on their way to college in a car at the time. The song was sung to the tune of the nursery rhythm "Pop Goes the Weasel". Forty years on Bing included the nursery rhyme in one of his medley albums for Warner Bros. Records.

WERE YOU SINCERE? Song. Also featured in *Billboard Girl*, Jack Meskill and Vincent Rose composed it as a love ballad for Bing. But because it was used in a Mack Sennett short it turned up in a comedy sequence. That involved Bing singing it to the person he believed to be his girl when it happened to be her brother dressed in his sister's clothes. Bing's 1931 studio recording for Brunswick treated it with reverence.

WESTMORE, BUD (1918-1973) Make-up artist. Bud Westmore received credit for make-up on Bing's 1936 film *Rhythm on the Range*, but the next entry shows that this was more of an apprenticeship exercise for the eighteen year old.

WESTMORE, WALLY (1906-1973) Make-up artist. Wally Westmore became Bing's regular make-up man from 1942 onwards. The Crosby films on which he worked to powder our man's nose and straighten his hair piece were:

Holiday Inn (1942)
Road to Morocco (1942)
Star Spangled Rhythm (1942)
Dixie (1943)
Going My Way (1944)
Here Come the WAVES (1944)
Blue Skies (1945)
Road to Utopia (1946)
Welcome Stranger (1947)
The Emperor Waltz (1948)
Road to Rio (1948)
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1948)
Top o' the Morning (1949)
Riding High (1950)
Mr. Music (1950)
Here Comes the Groom (1951)
Just for You (1952)
Road to Bali (1953)
Little Boy Lost (1953)
White Christmas (1954)
The Country Girl (1954)
Anything Goes (1956)

The Westmore family had representation in Hollywood's major studios during the production line years. Father George emigrated from England to California and worked on Rudolph Valentino. With the advent of the sound era George used his personal success to obtain make-up jobs for his six sons. (The other four were Mont, Perc, Em and Frank.) It is said that hairstylists and make-up personnel were privy to more first hand Hollywood scandal and gossip than the partners of the stars they beautified. However, only one Westmore, Frank, wrote an autobiography and he did not work on the Paramount lot.

WE'VE GOT ANOTHER BOND TO BUY Song. Jimmy McHugh and Harold Adamson wrote this fund-raising ditty for Bing to sing in the World War II short *Hollywood Victory Caravan* (1945). Bing did not make a studio recording of the song.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A GENERAL? Song. Bing posed this question via a television sequence towards the end of *White Christmas* (1954). The general in question was Major General Tom Waverly (Dean Jagger), who had been commanding troops on Christmas Eve, 1944, the setting for the film's opening. Like all songs from the film "What can you do with a General" was composed by Irving Berlin.

WHAT WOULD SHAKESPEARE HAVE SAID? Song. Oscar Levant accompanied Bing on the piano when the latter sang it as a demo in *Rhythm on the River* (1940). It is then performed at a party by Lillian Cornell to demonstrate that Oliver Courtney (Basil Rathbone) had not lost his composing talent. The "real" composer was Bing. The real, real composers were Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco. It was not selected by Jack Kapp for Bing to record when a studio session of the film's songs was scheduled but a good quality soundtrack recording has been issued.

WHAT'LL I DO Song. Recorded by Bing for the film soundtrack of *Blue Skies* (1946), this was one of the Irving Berlin composition which did not make it to the film's final print. Once again, a soundtrack version has been made available. Bing finally got around to making studio recordings of the song in the 1960s.

WHAT'S COOKIN', DOC? Cartoon. Made by Warner Bros. in 1942 this Bugs Bunny cartoon has a sequence set at an Academy Award ceremony. Bugs, voiced by Mel Blanc, impersonates Bing.

WHEELER, LYLE R. (1905-1990) Art director. Wheeler received co-credit with Leland Fuller for his work on *Say One for Me* (1959). He was also Art Director on *Let's Make Love* (1960) in which Bing made a cameo appearance. At the time Wheeler was at the pinnacle of a career which saw him win five Oscars in all starting with *Gone with the Wind* (1939). More remarkably, during the 1950s he had been nominated for an Academy Award every year but one - 1957. His final Academy Award nomination for that decade came the year of *Say One for Me* for the film *Journey to the Centre of the Earth.* The next year he retired from heading the art department of 20th Century-Fox, a post he had held since 1944.

WHEN IRISH EYES ARE SMILING Song. Bing recorded this sentimental ballad by Ernest Ball, Chauncey Olcott and George Graff jr. in 1946. Three years later it was featured in *Top o' the Morning* (1949), when Bing sang it to a five year old moppet before setting out for Cork to trace the missing Blarney Stone.

Keith Parkinson

Here Come the Girls

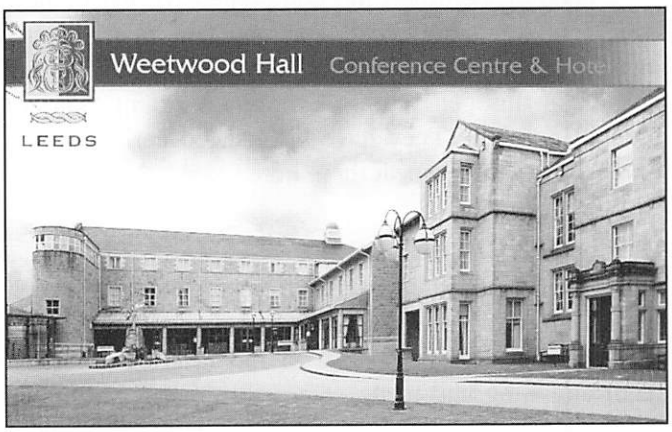
This is a 1953 film starring Bob Hope, Tony Martin, Arlene Dahl and featuring Rosemary Clooney. Your editor was viewing this as part of his research for the book on Rosemary Clooney being put together with Ken Crossland and which is to be published by Oxford University Press. The film, which is supposed to be set in 1900, is excruciatingly bad and the songs are terrible but there was almost one bright spot. Hope tells a young call boy in the theatre to watch his performance from the wings and one day he will be famous like him. Bob then asks the boy his name. The lad replies "Crosby" leading Hope to grimace and say "and what's your first name?" The lad says "Bang" to which Bob responds "That's pretty close." In a later scene, after Hope's performance has been a disaster, the boy kicks Hope in the shins!

Leeds 2010

International Club Crosby - 45th Annual Dinner/Meeting - Sunday 3rd October 2010

Bob Halls send his comprehensive report.

Sadness to Elation, what a bizarre way to open a conference report! The sadness included, for me a lump in my throat as I gazed on the assembled gathering for this, the 45th annual meeting of the International Club Crosby in Leeds at the prestigious Weetwood Hall. I'll explain that now and leave the elation part to the end of the report.



My attendance at this long standing event only began four years ago, but in that short time I have come to know many of the stalwarts of the ICC and now relish meeting up with them each year. Unfortunately, with the age group concerned, the fall-off rate is high, and I fear the section in each magazine which lists those members who have passed away.

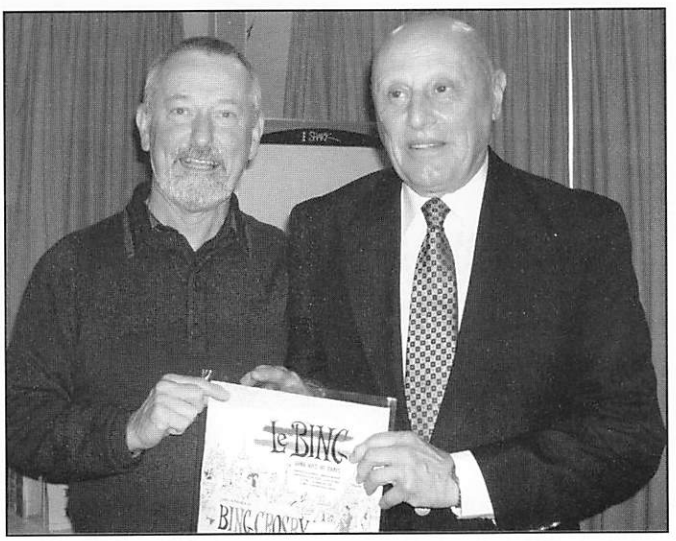
On this occasion it was Ron Bosley and Wally Oldfield who we all stood in silence for, and it was Wally's absence which was really poignant for me. I took up my position for taking notes of the meeting for the report and realised that I had automatically moved to the back of the room on the left, this where Wally had sat over the last four meetings and where, when I struggled with names to faces like Kitty Carlisle, Leila Hyams, etc. etc, Wally would smile and just fill in the gaps for me. It was also him who welcomed me like an uncle figure to my first meeting, then made sure I was on his dinner table. It was made worse because there was an empty chair there at the start of the meeting and I felt a tear in the corner of my eye. Thanks Wally and rest in peace, as the last ICC member to speak personally to Bing, I have no doubt he was there to welcome you with a song as you passed on.

Introductory Remarks

As we had gathered, a PowerPoint presentation of a selection of 20 tracks from recent CD releases, plus 120 photos had been shown and then it was time for the customary *'Blue of the Night'* welcome, plus the silence as described. **Michael Crampton** opened with a welcome to new attendees Michael and Mrs Reynolds, Frank Startup, Pat Wagstaff, Len and Mrs Livett and amazingly Renato Failace, all the way from Brazil, how wonderful is that! (for want of a better term). More about him at the end. Also and just as amazing, for their second visit in two years, Perry Huntoon and Ron Field from America. Ron had only decided at the last moment to come and it gave Michael quite a shock to meet him at the hotel on the night before.

Apologies were received from Jeremy Rose in France, George O'Reilly from Ireland. Maria and Lars from Scandinavia and from Bert Bishop, who hasn't been too well of late. Needless to say there were some key figures mentioned there and we really missed them. Michael advised that Ken Crossland sent his apologies, but suggested he chose some Ryder Cup Golf Tournament over us? Oh well Ken, having grassed them up you can take it up later!

Michael paid tribute to Renato Failace for travelling to the event and presented him with the incredibly rare *Le Bing* 10" LP.



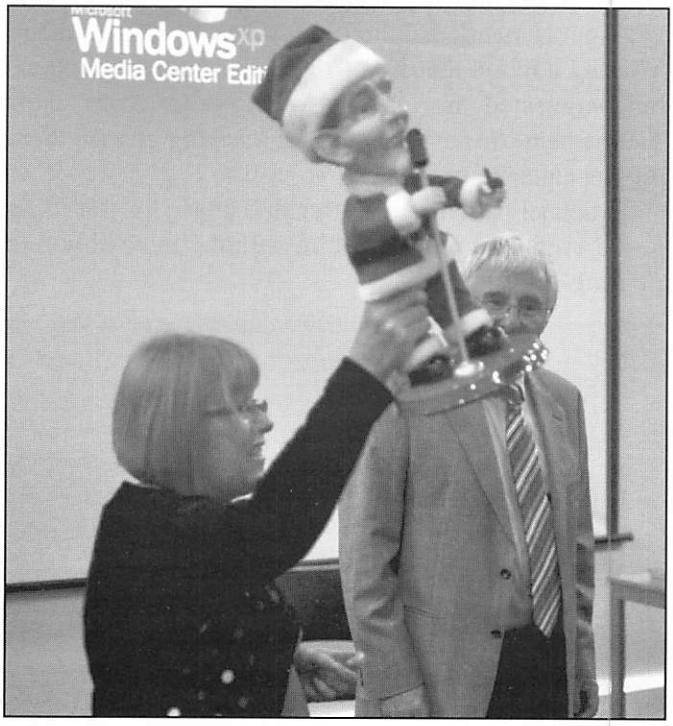
Michael (left) presents Renato with Le Bing.

Michael also introduced Michael Reynolds, who attending for the first time with his wife, is the son of the late Fred Reynolds. Fred was of course, responsible for the wonderful *The Crosby Collection* series of books which followed his much acclaimed tome 'The Road to Hollywood'. Michael Reynolds had brought a number of books and magazines along for sale, and kindly offered to donate half the proceeds to the ICC.

Michael Crampton then recounted several reflections on 45 happy ICC meetings, as well as the club's accomplishments over the years, and poignantly referring to there being just two songs on the original 78 rpm records, as opposed to many thousand now storable on an iPod, not to mention the quality of CD / DVD recordings of songs, shows and films.

He also highlighted examples of beautifully presented early publications of Bing and his music, all hand typed and reproduced for members, to the modern professionally compiled presentations by Malcolm, including the wonderful BING magazine. Malcolm received a huge round of applause! Michael also thanked the rest of the team, including Wig, David, Greg and others for their continuing work for the club. He made the point that Bing Crosby may have been a little surprised, but quite happy to find the ICC still going strong all these years after his death.

Michael finished with an announcement that a special Kraft CD is being produced and sold at virtual cost, to mark the 75th anniversary of the club and encouraged all members to buy copies to help club funds, as well as the yearly club produced calendars.



Sales

As has become the custom, Malcolm embarked on another auction of Bing odds and ends, yours truly feeling rather guilty about outbidding everyone for a little Crosby statuette. But the highlight was undoubtedly Michael Crampton securing the singing Bing doll, dressed as Santa, not for the desirability, or otherwise of the item, but for Michael's wife Judith's aggressive intervention, swiping the little Crosby from the hands of the provider and refusing point blank to allow a rather disgruntled looking Michael to take it home. With some considerable determination she thrust the poor little thing straight at an unsuspecting Ron Field, who free of charge found himself as the new owner. Good on yer Judith, nice touch! My partner Yasmine would have been equally forceful! The photo of Judith's face at the peak of the performance says it all!

1970 Message from Bing

This was another message to club members, recorded by Bing whilst filming in San Francisco. His demeanour, as usual was charming and encouraging, talking about up and coming projects and paying tribute to retiring club veteran, Frank Murphy. The usual suspects feature in prospective shows, including Dean Martin, Jackie Gleason and inevitably, Hope. He said that he was leaving for Africa in the next few days for a vacation and thought he may get time to call into the UK on the return journey. He finished with a warm 'goodbye and good luck' and left us all with that feel good feeling. I love these old messages, which are completely new for me and other recent members.

New Releases

Malcolm identified the comprehensive list of new Bing releases, which really encompasses a newfound interest in Crosby and gives us hope that his music may live on in this generation to a greater extent than we thought possible. They have been listed earlier in this issue so I will not repeat them here.

Bing and the Internet

Malcolm showed an item from the Internet which seems to have provided Bing's memory with more publicity than anything else in the last few years, a recording Bing had made of possibly the most famous baseball game in the history of the game. The item states, **'Bing Crosby saves a piece of Baseball history'** and features a full recording of the 1960 game between the New York Yankees and the Pittsburgh Pirates which was the only time a home run has secured the championship. (Whatever that might mean!) Apparently it was located in Bing's basement, Kathryn Crosby telling a gobsmacked interviewer on ABC news that it was just one of thousands of items of interest in the basement, to which he was not granted access. Makes the mouth water doesn't it! To date this item has had 13000 hits across the world!

Malcolm also brought up the **Bing Crosby**

Facebook page, which has now reached a total of 8000 members who state they are Bing fans. Yours truly recently put a comment on it suggesting that some of them might want to join the ICC. However, whatever you feel about Facebook, this is a very adaptable and useful site for Crosby publicity and they pick up almost anything, however remote, about Bing. Give it a look!

Malcolm's interview with Rosemary Clooney's daughter Maria

Now this was a masterpiece and Maria was most forthcoming during an interview with Malcolm in February of this year. With Rosie being so close to Bing and his second family, Maria, now in her fifties, was brought up with Bing's three children by Kathryn and she gave a fine perspective on life around the Crosby family. Incidentally Malcolm is researching Rosemary Clooney's life and career for a future publication, hence the interview. The bits about Bing came at the end of a three hour interview, primarily about her mother.

Perhaps most poignant is Maria's statement about the ordinariness of Bing and that he was not regarded by her as some incredibly famous superstar, but someone who was 'just around' and that 'there was no big announcement that Bing was coming round'. She goes on to say that he was her mother's best friend, who 'gave her the break she needed most at that time'. As Malcolm interjected, Bing resurrected Rosie's career, projecting her into the limelight again at a time when she was only doing Ramada Inn type engagements, this acknowledged by Rosie in her autobiography,

Maria talked about the fun they all had, 'just one big happy family' during the 70's Palladium shows, and how emotionally affected her mother was when she accompanied Bing to Ireland during a rendition of "Danny Boy".

She talked of attending a party at Bing's house on his birthday and how easy he was to be around and of visits to different sporting events etc. (All a very different perspective to that portrayed in Gary Crosby's book, 'Going My Own Way')

The funniest story, which suddenly came to her recollection, which she literally pounced on during the interview, was when Bing and the musicians were waiting for a late Rosie to arrive for a rehearsal for the Palladium shows, Bing, a stickler for time keeping, became agitated and looking toward the assembled musicians, said to Maria, 'Hey kid come over here, you know "Slow Boat to China", come and sing it now' She did, shaking with nerves, but can always boast that this was the one and only time she sang with Bing Crosby! She did however state that she wanted to 'take my mother to the wood shed'. What a great story, I wonder how many people have heard that one!

Malcolm finished this little gem with a duet featuring Bing and Rosie singing a medley together. Well done Malcolm, you never fail to impress!

Odds and Ends

This was a collection of oddities which follow no real pattern and covers quite a wide spectrum. I will try to summarize what we saw on screen.

An **award ceremony by 'Look Magazine'** showed Bing trying to show some enthusiasm for being awarded 'Best Performance by an Actor' for the film, *Country Girl* with Grace Kelly. We all know how Bing felt about individuals pouring out admiration for him, well oh boy, did Red Skelton, the presenter, do just that or what! It was like Bing was sitting on a coiled spring, just waiting to bounce away! We also saw **Crosby unveiling a plaque for the $750,000 Gonzaga Library** which he sponsored. He looked much more comfortable here, apart from looking a little overawed whilst standing beside one of the university basketball players who looked about ten foot tall!

A clip from *Alias Jesse James* followed, with Hope in a gunfight with some pretty villainous gunslingers. With loaded guns supplied by Rhonda Fleming, Hope is seen firing at will as the villains are dispatched to Boot Hill. However all is not as it seems, and after each shot, the real firer is shown behind a wall or similar, in the shape of Matt Dillon (alias James Arness), Roy Rogers, Wyatt Earp (alias Hugh O'Brian), Davy Crockett (alias Fess Parker), Gary Cooper, Tonto (alias Jay Silverheels), Ward Bond from *Wagon Train*, Annie Oakley (alias Gail Davis) and of course last but not least, Bing, who states, 'This fella needs all the help he can get.'

We see **Bing in drag in *High Time***, not looking too comfortable in a flowing ball gown, then looking much more himself singing "The Second Time Around". The rather ageing **Shell Advert** was next, with Crosby singing away about 'going well on Shell Shell Shell.'

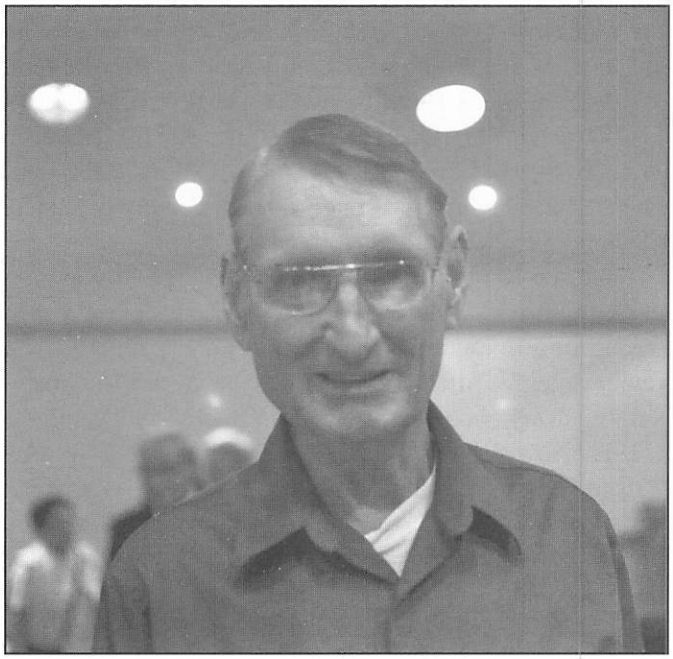
The focus then jumped to a recent **Andy Williams Tribute Show**, in which Andy hailed Bing as one of his early heroes and referring to his part, with his brothers on the *Going My Way* song "Swinging on a Star" way back in 1944. A clip of Andy and Bing singing together was shown and I realised just how well the two voices blended, the low liquid gold of Bing and the defined high notes of Andy's voice. What a pity they didn't do a full collaboration!

Onward to a **Vera Lynn Show of 1975**, with Bing, voice strong and controlled, singing "That's What Life is all About", followed by an excerpt from the ill fated **Pasadena Show of 1977** where Bing fell from the stage sustaining serious injury. The segment finished with an excerpt from an outdoor performance in **Norway** in 1977 with rain falling in torrents.

Presentation by Perry Huntoon - Bing and Jazz

Perry from Chicago and a member of the *Brookfield Worldwide Jazz Society*, gave a most interesting presentation, looking at Crosby's jazz influence, notably

in the period December 1931 to May 1932 and later in 1946. Perry had grown up with Bing's music of the 40's and 50's era, but listened to a 3 LP set some years ago which featured Bing in the 30's, the commentator Michael Brooks suggesting that this was the best voice era for Crosby. Perry didn't agree, but was forced to change his opinion after listening to 5 songs in particular with Bing in jazz mode. This was the time of the Dorsey Brothers, Bix Beiderbecke, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang and Jack Teagarden. The five songs featured and played to members were; "Dinah", with the Mills Brothers, with Bing going into scat mode, an unrehearsed "St. Louis Blues" with Duke Ellington's band, where in Perry's words, 'Bing was really in there with the blues,' "Sweet Georgia Brown" at studio sessions with the Isham Jones band, with Bing, again in Perry's words 'having a romp with the cornet solo', "Some of These Days" in Chicago with a band led by Frankie Trumbauer and featuring Eddie Lang and finally "After You've Gone" in 1946 with Eddie Condon's small group, known for New Orleans/Chicago type jazz.



Perry poses for the camera after his excellent presentation.

Perry made two points about the last two songs, one a prophetic observation on how Crosby's career might have taken a different course had his great friend and musical influence, Eddie Lang lived beyond this time. Would it have been more jazz orientated? The second observation was just how comfortable Bing was with all these jazz styles, to the extent that he was confident enough in his career to give the musicians freedom to play and 'let them go with it', this particularly evident in the "After You've Gone" rendition, which featured Joe Sullivan on piano. Perry made the point that it was these early sessions which helped in later successful collaborations with the likes of Count Basie and Louis Armstrong. I must admit to being a little unsure of jazz music, but Perry's presentation really got me thinking about just how good a singer you need to be to live with some of the musicians mentioned above. What do you think?

Greg Van Beek's Presentation

Malcolm makes no secret of his admiration and fondness for Greg, who keeps coming up with little gems to excite the annual meeting. This year was no exception and I've never met you Greg, but if you are reading this report, on behalf of the members at Leeds, thanks for this and all the other offerings you have provided each year, how great it would be to see you in person at Leeds!

Greg's DVD Presentation showed a selection of clips right across the spectrum and I'll do my best to do it justice in this report. It was shown in two parts, either side of another excellent dinner at the venue.

Michael and Brenda Reynolds enjoy their meal.

The first was a **compilation of out takes from *The Road to Hong Kong*,** Dorothy Lamour taking great pleasure pointing out to Hope, some unfortunate incidents during the making of the film, one of which saw Crosby knocking over a teapot which Hope forgot to tell him he had moved prior to filming the scene and Hope tripping as he and Crosby were supposed to be making their escape from the villainous guards. As Lamour said, there was one of the chasing guards actually overtaking Hope as they ran! Hilarious!

This was followed by a **duet from Bing and Mary Martin on the Bing Crosby Show of 1962,** apparently being released by Bing Crosby Enterprises soon. A rather lovely version of "I left My Heart in San Francisco" followed and Mary Martin coming in again to help Bing with "White Christmas".

The next clip however, really amazed me, as Bing

sang a modern song, **"Desiderata (You Are a Child of the Universe)"** with such power and conviction. The song, half sung, half spoken word is powerful in itself, but my word, what a fantastic effort by Bing, which really showed how he could adapt to changing styles. I actually believe that version could have been a hit with modern audiences, but then I do love that particular song. "In My Own Lifetime" followed, again sung with such conviction, almost as if Bing was demanding these things happen in his lifetime. A real lesson to would be singers on how to deliver a song!

After all this grandeur, there had to be something to lower the tone and what better than a **television advert featuring locals in an Scottish pub drinking Tennents Lager,** with the narrator saying on each swig, he likes Tennents lager, until suddenly there is Crosby wearing a country style hat taking a good swig of lager, the narrator announcing 'And Bing Crosby likes Tennents lager'. The only problem was that Bing looked in shock after swallowing his gulp, with a look on his face which said 'What the.....is that'!!!!! Great stuff Greg, where on earth did you find that?

Then out of the blue comes an extract from the **Dinah Shore Show** from 1975 where Bing is part of a four person panel, which includes Phil Harris and Pat Boone. The idea was that Bing had to identify from songs played by a studio group or sung by Dinah, the flip side of the record featuring his songs. Bing duly fails to recognize "Let's Start the New Year Right" from *Holiday Inn* and even worse had no recollection that the flip side featured none other than "White Christmas"! The show is hilarious, if only for some wonderful off the cuff remarks from Phil Harris, who just bounces off Crosby. You can see why they hit it off together.

Harris features again on the following clip, which was an episode of **The American Sportsman,** in which Harris and Crosby take to the fields for a pheasant shoot with a gamekeeper and his dog, a pointer I believe. This must have been one of the coldest days on record and Crosby and Harris enter into more banter, with Harris being accused of sucking his thumb after failing to raise his shotgun when a bird got up, to Harris commenting that the dog was either pointing out the position of a bird, or that its tail had frozen solid in that position! Again wonderfully funny, off the top of the head humour.

So to a **deleted scene from the *Road to Bali,*** a song and dance sequence which Hope and Crosby must have been really thankful for its deletion from the film. It was awful! Lamour was wearing a white dress/petticoat affair which looked as if the suspenders had become detached and a white thing on her head which resembled a fantail pigeon. Crosby and Hope were in cut off trousers, which appeared to have been blown off, as well as jackets with huge shoulder pads. The whole scene was thrown into chaos by 32 (yes I counted them) female dancers with white masks, who I'd swear couldn't see a thing. On top of that the song was appalling. I fear that the general opinion was that the film did not suffer without its inclusion!

So to the finale which included the medley with Hope at the Waldorf Astoria in 1970! Typical dialogue between Bing and Bob, with a three pronged attack from Hope as follows;

'This is the crooner I rescued from total obscurity'

'What are you laughing about; you would feel like him (Bing) if your whole career had been topped by a John Lennon cover'

And referring to Bing's *Going My Way* success, 'You really deserved that Oscar, any man who with all those kids can play a priest!'

Malcolm's 2 Hour DVD-Compilation of songs and clips of Bing Crosby's films from the 30's to the 60's

This is the part which has become very popular and shows just how professional our editor Malcolm Macfarlane's input is and how central he is, if the Leeds event is to continue. Last year's film compilation DVD, it has to be said far outshone most commercially produced presentations and another two hour offering this year matched, if not bettered last year's. Some of the clips, many from films like *Welcome Stranger* and *Say One for Me,* which possibly did not match the standard of the songs and were probably the least watched, came to life as songs in isolation and sounded really appealing. "The Secret of Christmas" from *Say One for Me* really made an impact, but my recollection of seeing the film just once was not enthusiastic.

As with last year, this compilation must have taken hours and hours to put together to get two hours of perfect combinations of clips and Malcolm rightly attracted a tremendous round of applause at the end. The one-off DVD was, as last year, auctioned to the highest bidder for the ICC funds. The bids went a little high for me and like last year a few of us missed out, again with regrets for a missed opportunity.

But what a great evening's entertainment and yet another successful event, if tinged with sadness because of absent friends. Thought to be the last ICC Dinner/Meeting, those attending seemed almost afraid of making the decision and it was agreed to 'give it one more bash.' I have a lump in my throat just thinking about it, however inevitable it may be! Malcolm played "At the End of a Perfect Day" again as the meeting dispersed. I fear that playing that song at a final event would be too much for me!

Conclusion

You may remember, if you have endured this marathon report, that I started with the words **SADNESS TO ELATION.** I have explained the sadness, but for me the elation came the next morning as a few of us who

stayed at the venue overnight met unscheduled over breakfast. If anyone had tried to guess the home locations of those gathered at the table, I doubt whether any guesses would have been correct. Dr Renato Rego Failace, a haematologist from Brazil, Ron Field, an Australian living near Seattle after working in the UK for some years, Perry Huntoon from Chicago, Illinois and Bob Halls a retired police inspector from Suffolk and now a cardiac rehabilitation trainer. We had hardly met before, but those few minutes just demonstrated how a long dead entertainer like Bing Crosby can still bring people together across the globe. We talked about the past, the present and the future, with possibilities of a group being formed in the States to host a Bing Crosby meeting, how it might work and whether some might travel. In just 30 minutes it was like we had known each other for years and we said our goodbyes with genuine warmth and a desire to meet again. **So who knows what the future holds! But one thing is for certain, Bing Crosby will feature somewhere along the line!**

Many regards to ICC members worldwide.

Bob Halls

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Bert Hamblet, Meols, Wirral, UK

I enclose a cutting from a local free magazine which featured an article by Monty Lister (of Radio Merseyside fame) on Bing.

Eight years ago, I did a west coast tour of America with my wife. The tour guide – an American lady – said as we passed the famous Del Mar racetrack that it was built in the 1930s by Bing Crosby and Pat Boone. When we got off the coach I said to her, "You are mistaken, it was Pat O'Brien a famous Irish American film star not Pat Boone, who was a 1950s singer." She thanked me for pointing it out.

Two years later my friend went on the same coach trip and as they passed the famous race track, the lady guide said, "This was built in the 1930s by Bing Crosby and Pat Boone." !!!

I used to attend the speedway meetings in Liverpool in 1949 and a record which used to be played during the meetings was Bing singing "Ghost Riders in the Sky," which I used to think very appropriate seeing all the dust all over the track due to the motor bikes. About 10 years later, I worked at the track as a raker and I often used to help pick up one of the riders who was called Roy Peacock. You know him better as Roy Chappell, the singer.

Why do the HMV shops never display Bing in their Easy Listening section? They have space for Al Bowlly, George Formby and Gracie Fields. The HMV shops, two in Liverpool, one in Birkenhead, one in Southport, all adopt this policy. Can't the ICC do something about it?

Lastly, any chance of getting *Holiday Inn* in colour in this country?

(Editor: I fear that HMV are now a lost cause although they still have lots of Nat King Cole CDs on offer. Let's hope that Holiday Inn *surfaces in the UK soon.*

Next, we are a little late in reproducing this nice email from Andy Williams. Martin McQuade wrote a detailed review of Andy's autobiography in the spring edition which evidently pleased Andy.)

Andy Williams, by email from Branson, Missouri, USA

In reading the Bing Fan Club spring issue, you talked about "Moon River and Me" in the 'Books 'N' Bing' section – it was very well done and I thank you. As you can tell by the article and the "Moon River and Me" book, I had deep respect and love for Bing. He was my idol and I still treasure our friendship. I enjoyed the whole spring issue. You really do a great job. Of course, you have a lot to work with.

Dave Smith, Newcastle-on-Tyne, UK – by email

I don't think I've had the pleasure of addressing you in the past or even thanking you and the rest of the boys on producing a regularly great BING magazine, my congratulations to you ALL in doing so.

Hope you don't mind me commenting on one item in BING No. 155 Summer issue even though it brought back many happy memories concerning that occasion.

I see that someone called John Ewens has been misnamed as standing with Bing in your photo at Bond Street with the late Reg and Les. Fortunately for me, I was able to ask Bing, with other privileged members, for a couple of autographs etc., and I was indeed pleasantly surprised to have been "captured" and included with, as you can see, with Bing, Reg and Les. My brother John presented Bing with a framed mosaic of Bing himself which had taken him a considerable amount of time and patience to make I must admit, and was greatly admired and accepted by Bing during the meeting we had with him during his recording session there.

Those were the days it seems. I probably go back a long ways - roundabout the time my very good friend Fred Romary was churning out those marvellous photos for the mag. He's well and happy I believe and an enviable source of musical know-how - especially when it comes to Bing.

(Editor: Our apologies to Dave for not correctly identifying him the photo.)

Jeremy Rose, by email from France.

Just received the latest BING. Great stuff as always, and thanks for the quote regarding my viewing of *The Country Girl* at the NFT.

I've just got home after a couple of months in the UK and I've finally had a chance to listen to the Collector's Choice/BCE releases. All very, very welcome, of course. As a would-be Crosby completist (aren't we all!) it's great to have both mixes of "El Senor Bing", but I have to say that I can't imagine that that sort of duplication would appeal to the general purchaser. It's a pity about the duplications with the Mosaic set on the Broadway album, but I suppose it could be argued that it will be bought by people who might not have been able to stretch to the Mosaic set, but can now appreciate the quality of the re-masterings.

Some fascinating stuff on the "So Rare" album, but for me, "Seasons" is the plum here - as I suspect it will be for a lot of people.

I bought the DVD set, but I haven't got a region-free player, so I'll have to sit at the computer to watch them, which I haven't had time to do yet. Anyway, a great time for Crosby collectors, and we're promised more by Christmas!

Priscilla Koernig, by email from San Mateo, California, USA

Received the BING magazine yesterday and I am enjoying it very much, as usual.

Thank you so much for re-publishing Pat's and my articles from our wonderful weekend with Larry and Bing. I must tell you something "funny" about the picture of Pat and Bing. Leo Lynn took the picture for us. I was on Bing's left. He didn't do this on purpose; however, when I got my pictures developed, I discovered I was cut off, which at that time upset me. The good part was the fact that before that and afterwards, Bing posed for many pictures with me and I really cherish all of them, I have very many wonderful memories of Bing. I know that he really enjoyed receiving the club journals and did read them.

Norman Wolfe, by email from Cumming, Georgia, USA

Enjoying the mag and loved the front cover. Exciting stuff about all the new releases isn't it? My collecting days are over but must confess to drooling over that letter from Wyoming. By the way, the record reviews are excellent - so well thought out. I was particularly intrigued by the news the *Return to Paradise* album has been remastered. Two of the sides on that, 'Adventures in Paradise' and 'Farewell My Tane' are superbly sung, every bit as good as I do them in the shower!

By the way, I don't expect you to print this stuff. This is just me rattling off to you. Besides you need the space for pictures of the editor. I note only one in the current issue, a deep disappointment to your legion of fans!

Bob Achorn, by email from Sutton, Massachusetts, USA

I realize today that I have failed to congratulate you and others concerned with the Summer issue. It is outstanding.

You were helped, I'm sure, by the flood of remastered tapes from the family basement. Much of that material was well done, and was worth doing, I think. On the other hand, I haven't heard anybody whisper a word about "Because." The song, an old chestnut at best, led Bing to stretch his tonsils all the way back to the 1930s. Anyway, it's different from most of the other stuff, which is easier to take.

I enjoyed the "Bing on Broadway" package, although the magazine properly warned readers of duplications from the Mosaic package. It's too bad that Bing didn't tackle more of that great material in those middle years. Too often, he wasted studio dates on inferior songs, presumably to accommodate friends, studio pressures and corridors full of aggressive song-pluggers. Ah, well...

Congratulations on the first-rate issue.

Chuck Ford, by email from Venice, Florida, USA

I just noticed that in the summer issue of BING, the feature entitled "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" states that *Welcome Stranger* was number 7 on the *Variety* list of box office hits of 1947. The list I have actually shows it at number 1, grossing $6,100,000, ahead of *The Bachelor and the Bobby-Soxer* and *The Egg and I*, both of which grossed $5,500,000.

See the web site:

http://www.boxofficereport.com/database/1947.shtml

My understanding from correspondence with the host of the above mentioned website is that his data is taken directly from the *Variety* articles. However, if Keith has data which refutes what I believe to be correct, I would like to know so that I can correct my web site (http://mysite.verizon.net/resrkzug/) which has *Welcome Stranger* at number 1 for 1947.

(Editor: It seems that Variety published a year end snapshot of takings in each calendar year and that's where Keith's figures originated. The figures on the Box Office Report site are cumulative over the life of the film based on the film's date of issue. During the calendar year 1947, films issued late in 1946such as "Song of the South", "Duel in the Sun" and "The Best Years of Our Lives" would have taken more than "Welcome Stranger" which is why it was in 7th position in the snapshot.)

Ron Field, by email from Morton, Washington, USA

Just finished reading the article where a couple of the members went to the recording studios to watch/hear Bing. Reminds me of a couple of things, which I may have mentioned to you at some time in the past.

February 1975. Bing was at Claridges. Lunch time I

whizzed down from the office (Great Western Royal Hotel at Paddington Station - British Transport Hotels, i.e. BR. Owned Turnberry & Gleneagles as well).

Anyway, I had gathered some items about my golf club - Calcot Park GC at Reading. I dropped the items off about noon with a note asking Bing if he would have time for a game of golf. About 3.00pm or so my phone rang and on answering the voice said - Bing Crosby here.

I nearly fell out of the chair on hearing this. Anyway Bing went on to say that he hadn't "brought his sticks with him" and was on a tight schedule and wouldn't have time for golf.

I have forever after been kicking myself for not having asked Bing if I could attend the studio. I'm sure he would have said yes. So, those few members were lucky.

Number 2. A bloke at the golf club and fellow BR man, well his mother-in-law lives around Stonebridge Park/Wembley area. She was walking along the street and this big limo pulled up. The driver put the window down and she stuck her head in. She was amazed because Bing and Fred were in the limo and they said to her astonished look - yes, it's us. They were looking to getting to the Wembley studios.

I had spoken to Bing a couple of times on the phone in London. 1967 when I spoke he was going to Wentworth. I lived at Wembley Park but wasn't sure exactly where Wentworth was. Also I had no transport.

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia

David Currington recently sent me the new BING magazine, which I 'devoured' with delight, as usual. Who would have thought that there was still another Crosby film to be 'discovered', so I've emailed Greg about that.

As for songs with 'Bing' in the lyrics, I know of three Aussie compositions which qualify: 'It is Crosby-Who else would it be?' (Vic & Bob Rees, Eric Aitken & June Stevens, 1944) recorded by Doris Turner on W & G; 'If Bing would only sing to me' (Eric Aitken, Will Bevan & John Wheeler, 1952) recorded by George Trevare's orchestra on Parlophone; 'Bing' (Paul McKay, 1977) recorded by McKay on Fable.

Another list I have includes 'Bing' recorded by Dinkie Rew on Columbia DB-2811 (1950) and 'Mr Crosby' recorded by Edgar Broughton on Harvest HAR-5049 (undated) but I can't vouch for their accuracy and have no idea who those two performers are.

Last Sunday night the news of the discovery of Bing's film of the 1960 World Series baseball match was given a prominent coverage on our national gov't-owned SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) One TV's World News Australia. It included excerpts from the footage and an interview with Kathryn in which she said that Bing couldn't bear to watch the final game and was overseas at the time. I'm sure you've seen the same coverage.

Martin McQuade, by email from Brooklyn, USA
You can add yet another song to the list of those referencing Bing. In the 2006 Broadway musical *Grey Gardens* with music by Scott Frankel and lyrics by Michael Korie, "Big Edie" Beale and her daughter "Little Edie" Beale sing a song "Peas in a Pod" whereby they describe their most idiosyncratic bond. "We're an act like Crosby and Hope/ A Rosy Complexion and Ivory Soap/ Pip and Miss Estella/ Hedda and Louella/Two Peas in a Pod."
(Editor: Just heard another song mentioning Bing. Louis Armstrong in his 1957 recording of "You're the Top" sings "you're Crosby's salary.")

Alan Matheson, by email from Vancouver, Canada.
Congratulations on a great new issue of "BING". I liked the reviews of the new Collector's Choice CDs and the DVD. It was good that there was as much honest commentary about the new issues, although I've bought and enjoyed them all.

Frans van der Kolff, by email from The Netherlands.
I see there are many more Crosby items coming our way in the fall. The PBS special from BCE, the Universal Backlot series ... Great! I have just bought the 'America I Hear You Singing' CD, which was mentioned in the latest issue of BING - again a great edition, Malcolm. There's no other magazine that I have read for such a long period and cover-to-cover! It's forty years now since I received my first copy. Where has the time gone!
(Editor: Frans was of course the author of the Bing Crosby Songography which he published in 1996 and which is now out of print. This listed in alphabetical order all the songs we know Bing to have sung. Frans has kindly released his files to me and Richard Baker is steadily formatting them for us so that they can be placed on the BING magazine web site for use by researchers and fans alike.)

Jon Oye, by email from Waukegan, Illinois, USA
My wife and I took the kids to see *Nanny McPhee Returns* last Labor Day weekend, and I was pleasantly floored to hear the opening strains of "The Best Things In Life Are Free" as the credits ended and the movie began. I assumed the song was simply being utilized as background music on the soundtrack, but it turned out to be source music coming from an onscreen Victrola. It was played nearly in its entirety. Very nice to unexpectedly hear Bing's voice on the big screen, even though it was an anachronism: the story takes place during World War II, and "Best Things" was, of course, recorded for Bing's 1975 LP *That's What Life Is All About*. For those readers of *BING* magazine who don't have children of a certain age, *Nanny McPhee Returns* is

the second of a series of films adapted from Christianna Brand's *Nurse Matilda* books starring Emma Thompson, who is also writer-producer. Perhaps she has a weakness for Bing?

There's a special issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine on newsstands now, "The Beatles' 100 Greatest Songs." Number 20 on the list is "Please Please Me," and the accompanying article starts off with a John Lennon quote, "It was a combination of Bing Crosby and Roy Orbison," describing the inspiration for the song. He goes on to say that he heard Orbison's "Only the Lonely" while he was writing "Please Please Me" at his aunt's house, and that he'd always been intrigued by the double meaning of the word "Please" in the Crosby hit of 1932. A familiar story to most of us, but it's good to know that perhaps a few thousand more people will be made aware of Bing's influence on the Beatles.

What were the odds he'd turn up in *Rolling Stone* magazine eleven years into the 21st century?!

Frank Startup, Cirencester, Glos., UK

I had a great time at the Leeds meeting on the 4th and would like to thank you, Michael and all who organised it. It was terrific to meet people with whom I share an enthusiasm and I found everyone very friendly and welcoming, particularly a lovely lady named June who looked after me royally for the day.

Bing works with Eddie Heywood.

The presentations were fascinating, and I was very sorry to have to bale out in the middle of your superb compilation of film songs but train timetables dictated. I saw a fair amount of material I hadn't seen before - I loved the Mary Martin duets and am very pleased to learn that the show from which they came will be on volume two of the television specials DVD. Also new to me was the song called, I think, 'In My Own Lifetime', which was moving and beautifully sung. Why on earth didn't he ever record it? The jaw-dropper for me, however, was the Tennent's lager advertisement, which was as hilarious as it was surprising - was it ever shown on television? I can't believe I would have forgotten it.

The presentation by Perry Huntoon on Crosby and jazz was interesting, and it was good to be reminded of the 1932 Ellington sessions. It set me wondering about the three studio sessions which Crosby made with black bands or combos in the 1940s, namely Eddie Heywood, Lionel Hampton and Louis Jordan. At a time when, at least outside the jazz world - I'm thinking of the Goodman small groups - the pairing of black and white musicians was pretty much taboo, I'm intrigued as to how these sessions, complete with publicity photographs, came about.

Did Jack Kapp and Decca approve, or did Bing override them? Given the trouble which, for example, Artie Shaw got into when he tried to put Billie Holiday and Helen Forrest on the same stage, it strikes me as a pretty brave thing to do, and certainly no other major white recording star did it - not Sinatra, nor Haymes, Eberly, or Como, as far as I know. I wonder if anybody knows any details.

Anyway, many thanks once again - it was wonderful to meet you all, and I look forward to seeing you again next year when, hopefully, I'll be better organised.
(Editor: The Tennents Lager advert was taped on July 3, 1975 at the Black Bull Inn at Straiton, Ayrshire in Scotland and it was shown on British TV during that year. Regarding Bing's work with black musicians, I am sure that this is a subject that Gary Giddins will cover in his next book about Bing which is due out in 2012.)

Perry Huntoon, by email from Chicago, USA.

Just received the latest Sepia from Wig yesterday. A most enjoyable CD as this was the time during which I first started listening to Bing and pop music and I still have several of the 45s from this period. I did not have the album "Bing Sings the Hits" so was unfamiliar with his version of these pop hits until many years later. Despite Bing being in great voice, I think these versions suffer badly compared to the hit versions due to the John Scott Trotter orchestrations. They were far out of tune with what the youth of 1953-54 were listening to. And they still don't sound good to me today. As to "Young At Heart," that is one of my all time favorite Crosby recordings. I thought the pairing with Lombardo was absolutely perfect. So, I am puzzled by your comments that "one wonders whether the orchestral backing was really a commercial proposition in 1954" and further that "Crosby aficionados may well prefer the more orthodox version Bing sang on his GE show on February 28, 1954." While this was a major comeback hit for Sinatra, I always delighted in playing Bing's version as being so much better largely due to the Lombardo

backing. I'm truly sorry that Decca never saw fit to pair their two best selling artists except for this one time.

Again, thanks for all you do to keep Bing's image alive and the ICC viable. It is wonderful to meet with other fellow Crosby enthusiasts.

Michael Reynolds, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, England.

Brenda and I would like to say that we thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and dinner at Weetwood Hall - she, I know, more than anticipated. We appreciate all the time and effort that you and Michael Crampton put in. The event was well worth it despite the monsoon conditions in which we had travelled from Staffordshire. To anyone uncertain about attending I would say try it once, meet those whose contributions you read in the magazine and, who knows, you might regret not going before and wish to make up for it in future.

Incidentally, upon listening to Sepia 6 - received at the meeting - I was caught immediately by track 1 "You Are Too Beautiful" which I cannot ever remember hearing before. It shows I have not taken enough attention of Dad's books myself for I find on checking that he too was taken with it. Fancy it not being issued until 14 years had passed since recording in 1953.
(Editor: Michael is the son of the late Fred Reynolds whose wonderful books about Bing are still much sought after. See Trading Post because Michael has found another small supply of the books which of course have been long out of print.)

Ted Laker, Southsea, Hants, UK
Thought the enclosed review might be of interest to you. It's from "Jazz Journal" August 2009, and gives a different slant on Bing, with appreciation from a jazz writer. Apart from the obvious mistake in the spelling of Bregman, it seems a fair appraisal and interesting to note that both albums have gone platinum! I also like the comments, note to pop stars, all done in one session ...and cheaper than a sat-nav.
(Editor: Ken Crossland did review the CD for us in BING #152 Summer 2009 but here's what Jazz Journal had to say. The 'Fancy Meeting You Here' album was of course recorded in three separate sessions, not the one session as suggested by the reviewer.)

BING CROSBY
THE JAZZ SIDES: BING SINGS WHILST BERGMAN SWINGS / CROSBY- CLOONEY: FANCY MEETING YOU HERE
(a) Crosby (v) with Buddy Bregman Orchestra including Harry Edison, Pete Candoli (t): Frank Rosolini (tb): Bud Shank (as). Hollywood, June 11-12, 1956.
(b) Crosby, Rosemary Clooney (v) with Billy May Orchestra including Pete Candoli (t): Si Zentner (tb): Buddy Collette (as). Hollywood, August 7, 1958. (c) Bob Scobey group. 1957.
(International Jazz Album EJA 043)
Buy one get one free. You'd probably prefer the "Fancy Meeting You Here" set, thus getting the "Bing Sings ..." free. And that may be about right. Buddy Bregman can swing, not always mind. His arrangements for Ella's Rodgers and Hart album were superb. Elsewhere he swings standards but often wouldn't swing if you hung him. And here, for me, the flash arrangements don't suit too well, leaving the Ol' Groaner a bit out of kilter. They'd suit Sinatra fine but are too sharp mostly here. And I speak, along with the excellent Gary Giddins, as a great fan of Bing's early days. Here, Bing strains a bit for some of the notes. *Cheek to Cheek* and *Blue Room* are OK, but Mel Torme had the edge on *Mountain Greenery.* To be fair, this album went platinum and some thanks are due to the wonderful West Coast top players.

The Crosby-Clooney album also went platinum. It's been a favourite with lots of old big band fans over the years. It's happy, sing-along stuff and Bing is in good fettle throughout. Rosemary Clooney was not accepted in the Premier League as a jazz singer, but is happy here well-chaperoned by Bing. *Hindustan* is a stand-out. All done and dusted in one session (sic), pop stars please note. Enjoyable. If you're thinking of buying a sat nav, get this instead for the car and save yourself a hundred quid.

Alan Luff

Monty's Memories

Bert Hamblet mentioned an article by Monty Lister he had sent in to us and here it is. It was from an edition of the *Wirral Champion*.

The date – Friday, 18th July, 1975. The place – BBC Television Theatre, London. The event – my exclusive interview with the legendary crooner and film star, Bing Crosby. It all came about after one of the most eager listeners to my weekly "Tune Tonic" programme on BBC Radio Merseyside – Roy Booth of Little Neston, Wirral – phoned to ask if I would like to do an interview with Bing.

I thought he was pulling my leg until I discovered that he had been compiling a history of the Decca Record Company for some time and in doing so had received much help from Bing and had met him in person in the past. As a member of the show business union Equity, Roy had had walk-on parts in a number of television programmes including Granada's "Coronation Street" where several members of the cast regarded him as one of their number. Without further ado he made arrangements for me to join him at the Television Theatre where Bing would be appearing on the Michael Parkinson chat show. Unfortunately Roy, who had not enjoyed the best of health for some time, struck a bad patch which prevented him from travelling to London for the meeting with Bing. What happened next was up

to me!

With a broad smile and a firm handshake, Bing said 'It's great that you came all the way up from Merseyside to do this interview, Monty. I really appreciate it. I was just through Southport and had time to play a round of golf at Birkdale and I think it's one of the best links in all of the British Isles.'

I asked him if, looking back on his fifty years in show business, there were events that he recalled with particular affection. His reply: 'So many things, it's hard to think of any one thing. I had great times with Barry Fitzgerald, great times with Hope, great times with Astaire, Grace Kelly, Sinatra - I think of people I've worked with; that's the factor that makes me recall nostalgically anything I've done.'

Declaring a great affection for Britain because of the golf, the horse-racing and London, he said he'd been in all the great cities of the world but London was 'Standout.'

'On this visit I'm having a great time touring around with my family. I have the two boys with me. They're pretty good golfers and we have some good games. We've played all the northern courses so now we want to go down south and play Sandwich, Deal, Rye, Sunningdale, Wentworth, Swinley Forest, Royal Berkshire and Walton Heath. They're all courses I've played and I want the boys to see them.'

He seemed quite amused when I said he was like a walking golf gazetteer. Before inviting him to send special get well wishes to listeners who might be feeling off colour, I asked him how he had fared during his own recent stay in hospital. He said it hadn't been too bad. He was itching to get out so he behaved himself and did everything they told him to do. He wished all those who were ill a speedy recovery with special mentions for Roy Booth and Peter Murphy who were guiding lights in the International Crosby Circle.

Bing died on 14th October, 1977, leaving an enormous gap in the world of show business. In March, 1979, his great friend and colleague, Bob Hope, visited Britain and unveiled a plaque in memory of Bing.

While that trip was being planned, Roy Booth worked behind the scenes trying to arrange for me to meet Bob Hope at the London Palladium and notch up yet another exclusive interview. As ever, Roy was successful and on Thursday, 29th March, 1979, I came face to face with the great comedian himself.

With the tape-recorder switched on I started the ball rolling by referring to the many 'Road' films Bob and Bing had starred in - The Road To Singapore, The Road To Zanzibar, The Road To Morocco - and asking if he had ever been on the road to Liverpool. 'I sure have' was his reply. 'I was there a couple of times and enjoyed it. That's a great variety house you've got up there.' I told him that a town on Merseyside is called Crosby and that not far away is a place called Hope. 'Oh, really?' he said with a quizzical look - 'Which is the largest in population?' When I told him it was Crosby by far he shrugged his shoulders and with one of his infectious smiles said he wasn't surprised at playing second again.

...Referring to the plaque he had unveiled in memory of Bing, Bob said, 'He was the first in my heart and first in the hearts of the audiences because he was there so long - they loved him and they always will.' Bob Hope died in July, 2003, just two months after his 100th birthday....

Monty Lister

Bing's "Modern" recordings of 1968

Richard Baker is back with another in-depth look at Bing's work in the recording studio.

In BING No. 155, I wrote at some length on the topic of the "Longines" recordings of 1965 and 1968. This period was one of little recording activity for Bing. 1966 and 1967 each saw but two issued tracks, and there were two further tracks recorded in 1967 but unissued.

1968 saw greater activity, with, apart from the "Longines" sides, two albums completed. Though different from each other, they shared a common approach - a deliberate attempt at "modernity". One of them even captured this attempt in its title. They share, with the much earlier "Songs I Wish I Had Sung (the First Time Around)" the fact that many of the songs were in some way established in the public mind, by other, sometimes very well known, performers. Bing was inviting comparisons, whether deliberately or not, with very familiar recordings and in some cases even well-loved versions. Was this really a good idea? The practice of performers "covering" contemporaries' songs was well established, but this was different. The songs in question had entered the mainstream in particular performances but had not yet achieved the status of "standards".

The two albums were "Thoroughly Modern Bing" and "Hey Jude, Hey Bing". What was modern about them and why were they a break from the past?

I believe that in order to understand what was going on we need to take a broader view of the musical context of the times. Until at least the mid 1950s Bing, and some musical disciples, had set the standards of popular musical taste. They **were** the mainstream. Indeed the record shop that I visited most frequently in those years had display shelves of which by far the largest groups were labelled "Popular Male Vocal" and "Popular Female Vocal" and one had no difficulty whatsoever in finding just about any current issue LP (or EP) of Bing's, filed in alphabetical order along with those of Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Guy Mitchell, Jo Stafford, Rosemary Clooney and Peggy Lee. They were not only

the mainstream, they were the trend setters.

Then there was a revolution – or perhaps two revolutions. First came Bill Haley and his Comets, with "Rock Around the Clock", immensely popularised by its appearance in a film, with audiences dancing in the cinema aisles. Bill Haley didn't last but the trend set on hand did. The mainstream of popular music retained its standing in the record stores, but it now had an upstart companion, "Rock 'n' Roll", which grew ever larger, particularly with the arrival of one Elvis Presley and a flock of others in his slipstream.

Bing and others of like mind were still able to continue on their way. They had their own innovations but for them melody remained supreme, with their traditional backing orchestras, whilst for the new generation, rhythm, pounded out with guitars, drums and string basses, became the preponderant style.

The second phase of this revolution started around 1962, and by the mid 1960s had pretty well taken over. It was led by the Beatles. This time the change was so fundamental that the mainstream of pop music was in fact now "Rock". What had been the mainstream was now relegated to "Nostalgia" or "Oldies" or something similar. My experience was that by the mid 1960s it was necessary to search for records of the genre which ten years earlier was core mainstream, in all except the larger record stores, because they were relegated to obscure sections. It might even have been necessary to order them.

Another change was observable. In the past Bing had recorded songs featured in his films and they had become hits. After the films *White Christmas* of 1954 and *High Society* of 1956 this underpinning ceased. And of course Bing was getting older – he certainly could not be regarded as a matinee idol.

The overall result was that by the mid 1960s Bing no longer had the overwhelming popularity and awesome sales figures he once had. He might just as well have retired from recording altogether. He was still busy – he was involved in television, had several business interests, a young family, and no need to bother.

But he decided to adapt to modernity – he did not make the complete journey: he did not surround himself with plucked string instruments, but he took on the challenge of songs written in the new genre with an attempt to combine his vocal style and musical backing with the new. He no longer recorded original songs to make them his own, nor yet tackle the "standard" repertoire, but took relatively recent songs that had achieved some sort of success in films or as "stand alone" pops. "Thoroughly Modern Bing" followed mainly the former path, "Hey Jude" the second.

In my view it was only partially successful and resulted in what I personally believe was the worst album Bing ever produced. Before any readers that might be left after this reach for any handy weapons I must make it clear that I am a lifelong Bing fan and I would much prefer to listen to almost anything Bing recorded than many others' work, but I hope I listen with some sort of selectivity, not blind adulation. I listen to "Thoroughly Modern Bing" occasionally but more for reference purposes than pleasure.

As an aside at this point I will make a further comment. I have a strong interest in discographies, and in working through some of them I have been struck by a remarkable difference between Bing's recording activity and that of some others. There is no major body of un-issued recordings by Bing. (I exclude of course the many radio programmes of which recordings survive in some form). The one known complete and hitherto un-issued album was officially released in 2010. There are a few individual tracks left and several items not yet on CD, but no known albums. Many other artists have quite substantial bodies of un-issued material with multiple (and presumably failed) attempts to get songs "right", or whole albums that the producers or performers themselves have refused to pass. Bing was always self-deprecating, but was he in the end too easy going on what was released?

I feel that pruning of some tracks from "Thoroughly Modern Bing" was called for.

The sessions were on 9th and 12th February 1968 during which thirteen tracks were recorded. As on a number of other recordings, Bing was singing to pre-recorded tapes. The orchestra was led by "Bugs" Bower with a fairly prominent chorus. The issues since have been odd, because they have come with different permutations of tracks.

Pickwick issued the original LP under the full title "Thoroughly Modern Bing" but reissued it as "Sing-A-Long With Bing". They also issued a CD, renamed "Bing Crosby At His Best" to my mind quite inappropriately (and not to be confused with several others of this title) in about 1996 with only ten tracks

whilst Laserlight issued a CD titled "A Visit To the Movies" but with a different combination of eleven tracks.

The recorded tracks were

1. "Thoroughly Modern Millie" written by Bing's old partners Cahn and Van Heusen for Julie Andrews and the film of the same name. To some extent it is anachronistic. Bing is trying to be "modern" through a pastiche of a 1920s song for a film set in the '20s. To my mind the track is the best of the set, with Bing in good voice singing with energy to an energetic swinging big band background, but he fails to get the light bubbly touch that Julie got in the film. There are several rhymes that catch the ear. The song is really out of character and should be sung by a female voice– would a man really talk of being stylish to raise your skirts and bob your hair? But it is quite successful and oh, if this had set the trend for the rest! The song was nominated for an Academy Award but surprisingly lost out to…

2. "Talk To the Animals", by Leslie Bricusse for the film *Doctor Dolittle* where it was "sung" after a fashion by Rex Harrison, who had given up any attempt at singing at or even before the rehearsals for the Broadway production of *My Fair Lady* a dozen years earlier, and invented his own version of singspiel. Bing tries to sing it but it is not very melodious and it is possibly better done in the Harrison style – the emphasis is on a rhythmic and alliterative listing of animals and reminds me in some ways of some of the Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs without being as clever. The alliteration and rhyming is not totally successful because of the use of some artificial words which merely sound as if they were created to fill in awkward gaps. Why this should have beaten "Thoroughly Modern Millie" in the Academy Awards beats me, and I really do not feel that Bing's treatment improves it.

3. "Ding, Dong, the Witch Is Dead", (by Arlen and Harburg for *The Wizard of Oz*). It makes more sense within the context of the story when presented in the film by (if I remember correctly) the "Munchkins" though Judy Garland might have contributed. It is a highly repetitive celebration of the demise of the wicked witch but Bing can't really get excited about it and on the fade out at the end says "- - who needs it – he done flipped the switch on the witch – bye bye witch." A grateful farewell that it was over perhaps? He covers it in his professional way but it is not by any means up to his better standards.

4. "High Hopes", (Cahn and Van Heusen). Another Academy Award winner, from 1959. It was introduced by Frank Sinatra in the film *A Hole In the Head*. Others have pointed out similarities with "Swinging On a Star", but I wouldn't take that very far as I don't think it really compares. Really the only similarity is in the concept of holding up animals as exemplars of behaviour. The accompaniment is fairly traditional big band and none the worse for that. Bing tackles it quite vigorously. I find some of the rhyming schemes a little obvious and simplistic single syllable words (ant, plant, can't - ram, dam), but the ideas about animals tackling various jobs are imaginative. (Rams punching holes in dams etc.). But I suspect that Frank Sinatra's version is pretty well indelibly engraved on the memory of all who were conscious of popular music of the time. *(Editor: Members may like to know that an alternative take of this song is included on the new CD "Bing Sings the Sinatra Songbook".)*

5. "My Friend the Doctor", by Leslie Bricusse, again from *Doctor Dolittle*, and another that loses from being taken out of context. The music jogs along – the marching background is a pale reflection of "MacNamara's Band" and I find little to fire the imagination or light the memory. The chorus adds a little colour but does little to take things out of the doldrums.

6. "(I Call You) Sunshine", (omitted from Laserlight CD "At the Movies"). By Wolf, Howard and Bower, a writing team that means nothing to me except that "Bugs" Bower led the orchestra and made all the arrangements for the sessions. I can find nothing memorable here. There are some over-trite rhymes and the chorus makes another appearance with some doodling. Laserlight made the right choice by their omission here.

7. "What's More American?" (Kadish Millet). A Briton has to step carefully here. Everything sounds very patriotic and stirring and Bing clearly gets involved. Some of the groupings sound a bit extreme – in a couple of phrases we range from the Stars and Stripes and George Washington, via the Capitol Dome to bubble gum then back to the great and good, General Grant and Robert E Lee. There is an aspect to this song that I find tiresome that is nothing to do with all the worthy sentiments, the tune, or Bing's own presentation, and that is the relentless repetition of Bing's phrases by the

chorus. It's over-simple and unimaginative. But I'm sure that every patriotic American must agree with the sentiments expressed. A few "modern" references occur – to rock and roll and bingo (was this a deliberate play with Bing's own name? - I do not know the lyrics as originally written). This is one of the better numbers largely because it manages to be fairly rousing, which I'm sure is the objective.

8. "Where the Rainbow Ends", (Not on original or reissued Pickwick LPs or "At His Best" CD). (Cook and Greenaway). The thoughts and emotions expressed are poetical and Bing presents the song well but it is let down by a plodding guitar accompaniment with an obtrusive and wailing untuneful reed accompanist and largely wordless chorus. I like "the dimpled rain" and looking "beyond forever". I suspect that much better accompaniment could have done a lot for this.

There are two versions of the recording. They are identical in length. One has a purely instrumental introduction, the other opens on the very first note with prominent whistling which continues for fifteen seconds. In both versions Bing comes in at 28 seconds. In the second version there is a further brief whistled phrase at 1 minute 51 seconds. The first version is wholly devoid of any whistling. However, Bing's vocal contribution seems to be identical and I regard the two versions as alternate mixes. I am not aware of the existence of any officially published CD containing the whistling, which is a pity, because I prefer that introduction.

9. "Up, Up, and Away", (Jimmy Webb). The song gives a nice feeling of getting away from the humdrum world suspended under a twilight canopy searching the clouds for a star to guide us. Bing falters once and seems to be stretching to get upper notes on the final "my beautiful, my beautiful balloon". The chorus is again over prominent and, a sin in my book, we are confronted by another fade out. The melody and rhythm seem to me to catch the sentiments well but Bing is not as effective as I'm sure he could be. A retake with firm guidance on Bing's range and some suppression of the chorus might have produced a more satisfying whole.

10. "Puff the Magic Dragon", (Yarrow and Lipton). Peter Yarrow was the "Peter" of "Peter, Paul and Mary", a very popular pop-folk group active in the 1960s. They achieved some success with this children's song and an equal or greater success was achieved in Britain by "The Seekers" a pop-folk quartet originating from Australia. In their hands it was very successful with my own children. But it is a song for children and it depends on a great deal of repetition of the long refrain "Puff, the magic dragon lived by the sea, frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honah-Lee." Bing had a modest success with earlier attempts at children's songs but I wonder about this one. His presentation is not particularly adapted to "present" it to them and he merely gives the impression of wading on with it, with the air of "let's get to the end of this." He certainly fails to achieve the lightness of touch of either of the groups mentioned and stylistically perhaps he was attempting to go too far to adapt it to his own approach.

11. "Chim, Chim Cheree", by the Sherman brothers for the film *Mary Poppins*. The second song from a Julie Andrews film, though it was taken in the film by Dick Van Dyke with a short participation by Julie. It was another Academy Award winner, this time in 1964. It has a catchy if musically limited theme but is yet another instance of a song successful in its original context with its original performers which falls down out of context. It was written with the idea of a London cockney performer and phrases in it require the accent in order to work successfully. Dick was amusingly unsuccessful with his atrocious parody of a cockney, but the song worked in his hands. Bing, in the main, sings normally but rather oddly adopts an Irish accent inconsistently for the rhymes which might otherwise jar when sung in his normal voice and accent. Was he trying for cockney and getting Irish? I think the result is very odd.

12. "Love Is Blue" (omitted from "At His Best" CD) (Blackburn and Popp). The title is well caught from the opening chords. Bing is wearily expressing his blue feelings and the contrast with former happier times, well supported by the orchestra but again that prominent wordless chorus. If you want a song of despair and bleak blackness this is it. I prefer happier, melodic songs but I do accept that within its compass it is successful.

13. "That's All I Want From You" (never issued in any form). What appears to be the same song was broadcast in the Crosby-Clooney show on 29th March 1960 as a solo by Bing with the Buddy Cole group and appears to be a reasonably satisfying song without making any strong impression. I do not know what has caused its total non appearance in this version.

****

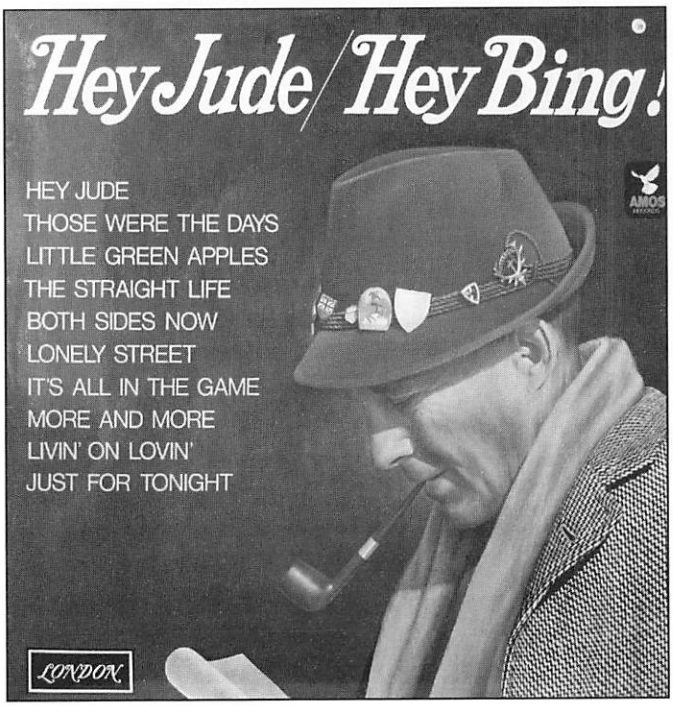
Measured against Bing's output from earlier and later times, I regard this set, taken as a whole, as the low point in his musical career. There are a few redeeming features though not many. I cannot believe that Bing had his heart in it. The primary problem was the choice of songs which had no sustainable life of their own. The second was the form of accompaniment or arrangement. Where it is not remorselessly rhythmic to the exclusion of almost all else, it is lacklustre. In short it lacks imagination. Bing was top rank: he needed to work with top rank players and arrangers. What is more, he needed to work with people who he knew and in whom he had confidence. On most of these requirements this set falls short.

I wrote earlier of the surrounding musical changes that must have influenced Bing in his choice of material. I suspect that another change that he must have felt was the loss of some of his musical friends and influences. Jack Kapp of Decca had a strong and directing influence

whilst he was alive, and John Scott Trotter and Buddy Cole who had been his primary accompanists and arrangers for many years must also have had an effect on his thinking. All were now lost to him, Kapp dying in 1949, the professional relationship with Trotter virtually ended in 1954 and Buddy Cole died in 1964. There had been a brief and in part highly successful partnership with Billy May a few years earlier that produced two stupendous albums with Rosemary Clooney and one with Louis Armstrong. Bing no longer had an ongoing recording contract with the guiding hand of a strong A & R man and was piloting his way through strange musical territory on his own, a territory that was changing rapidly. I am unclear whether the albums he did record originated from his own ideas or whether they were put to him by others trying their luck with a very prominent name, or old friends asking favours. I suspect a combination of the two latter. I believe that Bing needed a strong guiding hand to produce concepts and ideas with the ability also to stand firm – someone in whom he could place his trust – something he now lacked until the advent of Ken Barnes in 1975.

The next "modern" production was for Jimmy Bowen and his Amos Productions, recorded on the 21st and 25th November 1968, and, apart from a Christmas album recorded in 1970 and 1971, possibly as a favour for Sonny Burke, it was the only LP completed by Bing until that with Count Basie in 1972. It was of course "Hey Jude". Fred Reynolds describes this as follows:-

> "Although the songs were chosen from among the best of the new material they hardly bore comparison with the songs of Crosby's early days. Most of them were no more than basic in both melody and lyrics with single ideas repetitively used and the fact was not disguised by arrangements which did not stimulate Bing."



Personally I think that this was a little harsh but basically true. Such things are subjective, but to my ear at least, it was, as an album, a modest improvement on "Thoroughly Modern". Together they still rank, in my personal estimation, as marking the low point of Bing's career, but I believe that there are aspects which show that Bing was starting to get to grips with the more modern genre. The songs remain a very mixed bag. There were only ten and that in itself might be taken to confirm Fred Reynolds' opinion. The days of ten track LPs (usually in ten inch format) were past. Buyers expected 12 tracks (or more) on twelve inch LPs. Reynolds asks whether Bing merely gave up after recording ten tracks. If this is really true, it is perhaps a little surprising that he then would consciously deliver short measure to his fans. It has been suggested to me that there is another potential explanation revolving around the possibly prohibitive costs of a further session to produce just two more tracks.

I understand that Jimmy Bowen sold all of the rights to Amos Records to Universal years ago and that Bing made several alternate takes of each of the Amos tracks. Presumably these are still in the Universal archives unless they were lost in the fire. Perhaps there are copies in Bing's cellar too?

1. "Hey Jude" – a Lennon and McCartney number with which their group, the Beatles, achieved considerable success. To me the words are most obscure as to meaning, - A plea to Jude to make it better whilst telling Jude not to carry the world on his shoulder. It almost has a religious feeling to it but whilst Jude seems to be hailed as some sort of saviour he clearly has his limitations. The online reference encyclopaedia "Wikipedia" has a lengthy explanation of possible origins and meanings of the lyrics and comes up with several mutually conflicting alternatives of which it would seem that the most authoritative and likely is (and I quote verbatim):-

"In 1968, John Lennon and his wife Cynthia Lennon separated due to John's affair with Yoko Ono. Soon afterwards, Paul McCartney drove out to visit Cynthia and Julian, her son with Lennon. "We'd been very good friends for millions of years and I thought it was a bit much for them suddenly to be personae non gratae and out of my life," McCartney said. Cynthia Lennon recalled, "I was truly surprised when, one afternoon, Paul arrived on his own. I was touched by his obvious concern for our welfare.... On the journey down he composed 'Hey Jude' in the car. I will never forget Paul's gesture of care and concern in coming to see us." The song's original title was "Hey Jules", and it was intended to comfort Julian Lennon from the stress of his parents' divorce. McCartney said, "I started with the idea 'Hey Jules', which was Julian, don't make it bad, take a sad song and make it better. Hey, try and deal with this terrible thing. I knew it was not going to be easy for him. I always feel sorry for kids in divorces ... I had the

idea [for the song] by the time I got there. I changed it to 'Jude' because I thought that sounded a bit better."

I do not think this really explains the lyrics as some references do not stack up and I would think that there was some development that took it a little away from its original intentions. Wikipedia does offer other ideas and readers with access to the internet are referred to the lengthy entry. Others have mentioned St. Jude, the patron Saint of lost causes, as being some sort of inspiration.

Make of the lyrics what you will, Bing makes something of the simple melody line and treats it to a proper singer's treatment, but despite its use as the title song, I fail to get to grips with it. The chorus makes itself very assertive. Many hearing this recording at the time immediately turned back to the Beatles. I remember sneering comment about "your friend Bing" trying to "get with it." In its original form, performed by the Beatles, it was undoubtedly one of the songs that changed the shape of popular music in the last half of the twentieth century. I presume that was the key to its inclusion here.

2. "Those Were the Days" (Gene Raskin). Bing here is more in his element. The song has some traditional touches and nostalgic overtones and there are rousing moments. "Those were the days - we thought they'd never end." Slow nostalgia for the days gone past intermixed with the strongly rhythmic specific memories of them. This produces nice variety through the song but as it is quite a long one it needs this. It is certainly one of the better tracks here but the refrain becomes a little repetitive. It seems to me that the writers of such songs hope that they can drum the whole thing into your memory by relentless repetition. There is also some variety in the accompaniment with some almost Dixielandish breaks. I quite like it!

3. "Lonely Street" (Belew, Stevenson and Sowder) by contrast is short. We are in sad, lonely, country territory. A place where there's just loneliness - - - a place called Lonely Street. We are told it's sad and lonely but not given very much to enable us to understand why. The tune fits well. Something has gone wrong with the performance in the closing bars. The timing is wrong. Until then Bing catches the mood well, though perhaps he is more weary than sad.

4. "It's All In the Game" (Sigman and Dawes). A nice, if quite simple, melody let down by the lyrics and some aspects of the accompaniment. Bing is in a mature mood advising young lovers and it comes over quite well. Bing is more comfortable with this and fits the part, but the lyrics are a trifle on the banal side. The brass accompaniment is over obvious with repeated ascending chords whilst the strings repeat a solitary phrase over and over - and over and - - . Where was Billy May?

5. "Little Green Apples" (B. Russell). I personally have always been fascinated by the rhyming scheme here of multiple syllable combinations - the most obvious being "little green apples - Indianapolis – Minneapolis", without being able to relate very closely to the underlying meaning which seems to be overwhelmed by the clever sounds this produces. Parts of it are treated as a dialogue with the chorus. We veer from domestic imagery over the breakfast table to assertions that there is no such thing as Dr Seuss in nursery rhymes. Sorry, I'm lost. Once again we have fade out. Ugh! Why could song writers not find a decent way of getting to an end? Within the limitations of the song Bing makes a decent job of it, bringing the melody forward, whilst the accompaniment is supportive. The song overall is best appreciated, if at all, for its sound – the melody and the catchy words, rather than attempting too much search for joined up logic in the meaning of the whole.

6. "The Straight Life" (Sonny Curtis). Bing tackles this with some enthusiasm and a chorus seems to push him on. Bing imagining himself as a drifter with random thoughts as to what that might imply – leaving the straight life behind. Some of the imagery is trite – one of the ideals it seems is a girl running to him with crackers and beer. The rhyming scheme is over-simplistic with short single syllable words that I think make it sound jerky. Its positive aspect is a strong joggity rhythm which Bing seems to be able to skip along to. But is the drifting life really so hoppity-skipitty? I would imagine it as more relaxed and lazy.

7. "Both Sides Now" (Joni Mitchell). Bing has a quiet time reflecting on his experiences – the ups and downs of life but on balance apparently with a sad and gloomy outcome. Clouds got in the way but he's looked at them from both sides now and it's life's (and loves') illusions that he recalls. Something odd happens in the last few phrases where rhythmic and rhyming scheme changes slightly spoil the effect built up through the rest of the song – though this could be deliberate to lend effect to the "other side".

8. "More and More" (Karen, Robinson & Reuss). (Note that this is not the same song as that recorded by Bing in 1944). We are told that more and more I miss you honey since you have gone away with pleas to come home. It's a song of pleading and Bing pleads, so why do we have a sprightly accompaniment totally out of line with the sentiment? I fear that I do not want more and more of this one. Bing plunges on manfully through this morass but even he cannot make much of it.

9. "Livin' On Lovin'" (D. Burgess). An upright and sprightly number with a surging rhythm and quite spirited treatment by Bing, and he seems much more at home here than in many of the others. "Our love has let the sunshine in" and the trumpet almost gives a fanfare for each ray. A nice singable song which Bing gets enthusiastic about. If there are reservations they arise from closer listening to the banal lyrics. But certainly one of the better numbers here.

10. "Just For Tonight" (Baker Knight). Did I refer to banal lyrics? Well here we have some more with little effort at rhyming which is partly achieved by simple repetition and exchanges between Bing and chorus. As to overall meaning, there is none, more disjointed ideas and phrases linked by the refrain. The accompaniment – both chorus and instrumental, though rhythmic – is soporific. They're tired and want to go home.

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There are individual songs recorded by Bing that I like less than some of these – "Poor Old Rover" for one, for its sentimental mawkishness. It actually gets me laughing. But there is no other album, whether issued as such or as a compilation, where I get the feeling that Bing was wasting his talents to such a degree as these two. After these, things could only get better, and, after a gap, they really did, because we had the glorious Barnes years, with the little patch of light represented by the Bing 'N' Basie album, but we had to wait seven years.

Richard Baker

Editor: Thanks, Richard for a thought provoking article. Richard has certainly made me think about the lyrics of those 60s songs which I had tended to simply accept in the past.

In an interview with Jim Day in 1966, Bing was asked:

Jim: "How long do you intend to continue singing?"
Bing: "Not much longer!"
Jim: "Why not?"
Bing: Oh, it doesn't sound so good anymore. I make a record now and the disc comes back to me a few days later. I play it at home and I play it about half through and I take it off. It sounds too bad."

So his increased recording activity in 1968 was a real surprise although he was doing plenty of singing on his frequent appearances on the Hollywood Palace and other TV shows.

"Thoroughly Modern Bing" was recorded in New York because Bing had come to the Big Apple to take part in an Ed Sullivan show and in a big extravaganza with Bob Hope marking the opening of the new Madison Square Garden. These were the main reasons for his trip to the East Coast and it seems that he just dashed off the album in the limited time available before and after the shows. "Bugs" Bower, writing in *Sheet Music* Magazine, July/August 2001 said:

> Working with Bing Crosby was wonderful! He was the consummate pro—cheerful, prepared, knowledgeable, funny and very creative. . . . We rehearsed over the telephone—with Bing in Beverly Hills and me in New York City. It took a matter of minutes to set the vocal keys and musical routines. Everything was so easy. The following month, I met him in the lobby of a recording studio in New York City and he said, "Hi, I'm Bing." And I said, "Hi, I'm Bugs." With that, he said "Let's go!" and we were off.
>
> Bing requested that only an engineer and I be present—even though all the singers in the vocal group and the musicians desperately wanted to attend this session. He knew all the words to all the songs. (A music copyist had made printed lyrics for him to sing from, but he only occasionally glanced at them.)
>
> On the first song, "My Friend, the Doctor" (the longest song on the album) we spent about 25 minutes with vocal retakes. To my chagrin, when the engineer, Warren Slatten, tried to play Bing's track, nothing was there! The vocal track was silent. No Bing, no sound, nothing!
>
> I was really upset because I had no idea what was wrong with the recording. What could have happened? Well, we were lucky. Warren discovered a tiny piece of recording tape had somehow become trapped behind the recording head, canceling Bing's vocal track. Bing could not have been more understanding. He just shrugged his shoulders and said, "Let's do it again."
>
> Bing loved to sing and record—it was obvious when working with him that this was his life. He asked about the musicians, especially the ones who played the ad-lib jazz choruses. He complimented me on the arrangements and, overall, thought we had put together a very happy, professional-sounding album.

So the rehearsals were done over the phone... Perhaps that explains something? As Richard Baker says, "Up, Up and Away" should probably have been rejected but perhaps the producers were awed by Bing's presence and did not feel able to insist on a retake. It's a pity as I like the song and would have loved to have heard a good version from our Mr. Crosby. As with some of Bing's later albums, I find myself really liking four of the songs, feeling ambivalent about another four and not really enjoying the remaining four. My favourite is "Where the Rainbow Ends" which was recorded with two different backings. Bing liked it too as it was issued as a single and he sang it on the Hollywood Palace show of April 20, 1968.

Bing at work at the Hollywood Palace

The reception of "Thoroughly Modern Bing" by Crosby fans in the UK was favourable as anything new from Bing was always warmly welcomed. Ralph Harding in his *Crosby Collector* magazine of July 1968 thought it was a wonderful album although he was critical of the short running time of 28 minutes 50 seconds. Ralph particularly liked "Where the Rainbow Ends" too. The reaction in BING magazine was more muted and in BING #12 (December 1968), Michael Crampton wrote:

"In a recent letter to me Reg Bristo felt that in this album, there is the inevitable battle between orchestra and singer, and with the exception of a couple of tracks I'm inclined to agree, although this is light, fresh and definitely modern Bing, with his usual skills coming across."

In the same issue, Reg Bristo reviewed the events at the recent Leeds meeting and mentioned that Michael had played the album. He went on to say:

> "He also had the single "Where the Rainbow Ends" which was recorded at the same time as "Thoroughly Modern Bing" but not included on that album. It has been issued in America as a single but not, so far, here, which is a tremendous pity, for with "Love Is Blue" it is perhaps the best track."

Letters from members indicated that they liked the album but one quoted noted radio presenter Brian Matthew who had played "Puff, The Magic Dragon" and then said:

> "Without being a member of the Bing Crosby Appreciation Society I have, I suppose, a pretty extensive personal collection of the master's work and I also take delight on this programme of playing reissues of his vintage performances. Now this one I included with affection and gratitude for past pleasures and yet, with regret the Stateside "Thoroughly Modern Bing" is an album I wish Bing had not made. Of course much of the technique acquired through 40 years is still in evidence but nearly all the once incomparable quality is gone. So often artists who have retired at their peak leaving a wealth of superb material, are tempted back for one more go with disastrous results, and now, alas, dear Bing has joined their ranks."

However the prestigious *Gramophone* publication did not agree.

> Meanwhile there is overwhelming evidence that Mr. Crosby has lost none of his charm or skill in *Thoroughly Modern Bing* (Stateside SL10257). He works his lasting magic on "Talk to the Animals," "Love is Blue," "Chim Chim Cheree," and other modern songs of quality plus the oldie "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead" with the same ease and warmth that was discernible in 1928. He even transforms a blatant flag-waver like "What's More American" into something tolerable, and is the first singer to hold my attention throughout "Puff (The Magic Dragon)" without causing a single wince.
> (*The Gramophone*, January, 1969)

I like his version of "Puff" as well.

We highlighted the "Hey Jude" album in BING #150 (winter 2008) and it was Arne Fogel who commented:

> It's been said that Bing expressed a dislike for this LP many years later. I've often put forth the notion (and I'll do it once again) that Bing, in his unassuming way, was confusing the LP with another recorded that same year, "Thoroughly Modern Bing". Back in 1969, I distinctly remember Bing being interviewed by Mike Douglas, who asked him about "Hey Jude Hey Bing", and Bing's enthusiasm for the album and delight in its success was undeniable. Douglas then asked him about "Thoroughly", and Bing turned dour. Douglas sensed this and said "well, er... it has an awfully nice big picture of you on the cover," to which Bing replied, sourly, "Yeah, that was the only good thing about that album..." I believe that, several years hence, Bing confused the two LPs (both recorded the same year and promoted overtly as efforts to "modernize" Bing) and bad-mouthed 'Hey Jude' instead of the "Thoroughly Modern" release, which was certainly the most poorly produced, engineered, and recorded album in the Crosby discography.

ICC stalwart Les Gaylor met Bing in London on August 16, 1968 and said that he too liked the cover picture on "Thoroughly Modern Bing" and again Bing replied "Yeah, that's the best part of that album."

I have often wondered whether the *Hey Jude, Hey Bing!* album came about following Bing's singing of a number of pop songs in a medley in his TV show of October 23, 1968. He performed several current hits with great style and anyone listening to him would have wanted more.

The reviews of the album were good.

> ...A classic example of this trend are the new Bing Crosby recording efforts, an album and a single lifted from it. The album. "Hey Jude — Hey Bing" offers a program of the current chart items. If they weren't on the soft-sounding side in their original versions they are now that Bing is giving them his masterful once-over-easy treatment. Bing is getting much air play and sales are beginning to take shape right across the country, and it has been a while, hasn't it?
> (John Murphy, *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 15, 1969)

> Bing Crosby has lost none of his mellow warmth of voice in *Hey Jude, Hey Bing!* (London SHU8391) as he gives us his versions of the Beatle ballad, "Little Green Apples," "Both Sides Now," and "Those Were The Days," thereby adding to the potency of the songs themselves.
> (*The Gramophone*, July 1969)

Ralph Harding in the *Crosby Collector* of March

1969 was ecstatic saying, "this latest record album by Bing is the greatest I have heard for many a year" and he particularly liked "Little Green Apples". He also commented that the album was "a step forward from 'Thoroughly Modern Bing' and could mark a step forward in these competitive days of record sales."

Reg Bristo writing in BING #14 (May, 1969) was also very enthusiastic as he said, "I cannot, I will not, fault this new album of Bing's in any way. From the first note to the last, I love it." In discussing the ending of the "Hey Jude" number, Reg said "I have heard someone say that they don't altogether care for Bing's "pom, pom, pom-pom-pom-pom". My view of this is that it is a delicious piece of tongue-in-the-cheek subtlety; as if Bing was saying 'Get me, an old-timer doing this super 'modern' stuff.'"

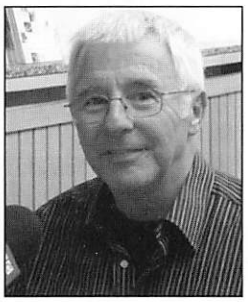
Edward Towler in BING #16 (November 1969) dissented saying, "what puerile rubbish most of the material on this album is. It is certainly not worthy of a singer of Crosby's status and to suggest that it is defies all credibility."

So, we all have different opinions and the only way for me to sum up is to suggest that you do as I did. Get the albums out and listen to them again with fresh ears. It's a very worthwhile exercise.

After all the activity in 1968, Bing's only work in the recording studio in 1969 was to lay down the tracks for the Goldilocks TV presentation. Perhaps he had decided that, for the time being, being "modern" was not for him?

Malcolm Macfarlane

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights

USA & Canada

Alias Jesse James	TCM
Angels in the Outfield	TCM
High Time	FMC
Let's Make Love	FMC
Road to Bali	TCM
Road to Morocco	TCM
Road to Singapore	TCM
Road to Utopia	TCM
Road to Zanzibar	TCM
Stagecoach	AMC

Bing helps out Bob Hope in *Alias Jesse James.*

A splendid contribution from TCM who mounted a mini Crosby-Hope festival with five *Road* films shown. *Angels in the Outfield* in which Bing has a brief appearance had a rare outing too.

USA Radio

We have already covered some of the radio programs concerned with the baseball film so we will not duplicate mention of them here. The 19 part series "A Chronological Crosby" concluded on Shokus Internet Radio. Host Mark Emanuel with commentary by co-producer Greg Van Beek featured all of Bing's top ten hit recordings, along with trivia about his career and other rare recordings.

TV highlights - UK

Alias Jesse James	TCM
High Society	Film4 / More4/ TCM
Road to Morocco	Sky Classics
Road to Rio	BBC2
Road to Singapore	Sky Classics
Road to Utopia	Sky Classics
Road to Zanzibar	Sky Classics
Son of Paleface	Sky Classics
Stagecoach	Sky Classics
The Greatest Show on Earth	Sky Classics
The Road to Hong Kong	TCM

I often think that *Son of Paleface* should not be considered a Bing film as Bing's brief appearance is merely a clip from *Just for You* but he is seen on screen so no doubt we shall continue to count it as part of the Crosby movie canon. The Sky Classics channel regularly revolves its Bing films and continues to do well by us.

The Argos Ad

I normally spin through the commercials but as I did so one night in October, my wife said, "Isn't that Bing?" Rewinding and playing at normal speed revealed that it was indeed the old groaner. He is seen walking on to the stage during the taping of his 1977 Christmas show and then preparing to sing "White Christmas". A hand picks up a microphone and then a figure dressed to look like Bing makes beatbox noises while "White Christmas" plays in the background. Two young girls in the audience are heard to say "Think he's Argosed it" and then a voiceover says "For something really up to date you'll find a huge range in the Argos catalogue." The 30-second advert could also be seen on the Argos Facebook page and on YouTube. Most people viewing it liked it although one commentator disagreed, saying:

"Clever but weird and disrespectful to Bing. Hope it doesn't set a trend of manipulating images of people who have passed."

Another responded:

"Ahh, I don't think it's disrespectful - will make a nice change from all the same old Christmas tunes on the telly."

However, a day or two later a web page headed as shown appeared.

Ban the Bing Crosby Argos Christmas Advert – Crooning NOT beatboxing

We don't want to see Bing Crosby beatboxing, we want to see him crooning away to an old classic like White Christmas.

We call on Argos to scrap your Bing Crosby advert that devalues a true Legend and the spirit of Christmas.

If Argos won't scrap their Bing Crosby Christmas advert we call on all TV channels to ban it.

Quite a few people responded and here are some of the comments.

- Seriously, give it a rest. It's a bit of fun, and that's how it's meant. Advert is great, funny, and in touch with its Market. Wanting to ban it is simply a sign of envy of creative marketing.

- Ordinarily I am a purist, and would never condone such a thing, but I liked it a lot. It was visually believable, and the beatboxing itself wasn't overdone. More power to the creators of this original advertisement. Another thing that one has to bear in mind is that Bing wasn't stuck in the past. I think that whilst he wouldn't have done such a thing himself, he would have approved of the "treatment" of his image. I would venture to suggest that the best way to protest against such marketing would be to boycott Argos, if you feel that Bing's reputation has been impugned.

- I thought this Ad is the best Ad on TV at the moment, can't wait to see it again. I think you need to cheer up and see the brighter side of life!

My reaction was that it was great to see Bing's image being used in this way. There's no such thing as bad publicity! As we went to press, over 35,000 people had seen it on the five separate entries on YouTube! Mind you, by the time UK members read this they will be sick and tired of seeing the advert as no doubt Argos will be using it constantly.

UK radio

The National Presenters

Knowledgeable **Russell Davies** celebrates the art of songwriters in his BBC Radio2 show on Sunday evenings. On Father's Day, Russell informed us that a Spokane lady called Sonora Smart Dodd started Father's Day in 1910 (although this is apparently open to dispute) so it gave Russell a perfect lead-in to playing a song by another Spokane resident of the time and we heard "Fatherly Advice" with Bing guiding eldest son Gary. Russell went on to quote from my notes on the Sepia CD "Through the Years vol. 4" where I said, "a large section of the lyrics of this item were reproduced in Gary Crosby's book, *Going My Own Way*, with the claim that it exemplifies the manner in which his personal failings were aired on national radio." Other Bing tracks played by Russell in the period included "There Ain't No Sweet Man That's Worth the Salt of My Tears". Russell pointed out that a female should have sung it and he wondered about the reaction in 1928 although it would no doubt be more acceptable now. Bobby Darin later sang it as "There Ain't No Sweet Girl..." On his show on October 10, Russell asked listeners to write in naming their favourite duet. He said that some artists were duet specialists and then went on to play one by "the chief perpetrator." It was Bing singing "The Spaniard That Blighted My Life" with Al Jolson!

Clare Teal follows Russell and occasionally fits in a Bing song amongst her Dance Band and Big Band items. She gave us "I've Got Plenty to be Thankful For" with Bing supported by brother Bob's orchestra. The final hour on Sunday nights is taken by **David Jacobs** and Bing is heard regularly with "The Second Time Around" being guaranteed a play in every four month period we review. Not much from **Desmond Carrington's** Friday night show this time around but he did play Bing's "I Whistle a Happy Tune" on October 15 as his theme for the programme was whistling.

The local presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria continues to amaze me with the number of Bing songs she plays on her Sunday afternoon request show. In the four months from June to September, she played 37 Bing songs and she easily retains the mythical "Bing on the Box" award. What is even more surprising is the eclectic mix of the songs, varying as they do from commercial and radio

tracks of all vintages to rare items from film soundtracks. Please keep sending her requests by email to anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk

Bill Rennells, together with his "rabid Crosby fan" wife, Angela, hosts *Harmony Nights* which is heard throughout the South East of England and on the Internet for three hours starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings. This is also a request show so email Bill at bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk. Trevor Wagstaff, Stan White and Ian Lawrence usually make sure that Bill and Angela have plenty of Bing requests but more are always welcome. It was nice to hear Trevor's request for "The Anniversary Waltz" to be played for Arthur and Vera Blood's Diamond Anniversary. Trevor also advised the presenters about how we always play "A Perfect Day" at the conclusion of our Leeds meeting and the track was duly played on the day itself. In all, Bill and Angela played 28 Bing songs in the period making them the runner-up to Anne Hopper.

Trevor and Pat Wagstaff at the Leeds meeting in October.

Paul Barnes on his "The Late Paul Barnes" show continues to be heard through seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk and click on the programme link. There is a "Listen again" feature for 7 days after each broadcast. Paul plays Bing regularly calling him "The Boss" and he always builds a Crosby feature around the ICC calendar on the first Sunday of each month. When talking about the July picture on the calendar, Paul made a point of thanking our own Stan White for his long support of the programme and he played "They All Laughed" by Bing following Stan's suggestion as Stan had reminded Paul about Ginger Rogers' birthday. On October 3, Paul also sent his best wishes to all those attending the Leeds meeting having been reminded of it by the indefatigable Trevor Wagstaff and he then played "After You" from the *Double Or Nothing* soundtrack especially for us. Paul Barnes is a great fan of the Mosaic set and he played a number of tracks from it during the period.

David Lowe in the West Country broadcasts his 2-hour "Swingers and Singers" show on Sunday nights at 8 p.m. and features "nostalgic music from a time when songs had a real melody." He is heard on eight BBC local radio stations from Gloucestershire to the Channel Islands and of course on the Internet (look for Radio Devon). David always gives full information about the records he plays, including recording dates, composers, orchestras and so on. The 23 Bing songs he played varied from a Kraft Music Hall version of "May I Never Love Again" to "Have You Met Miss Jones?"

BBC Radio Wales plays its part too. **Dewi Griffiths**, on *A String of Pearls* (Sunday mornings starting at 9:30 a.m.) had a special tribute to Bing as his listeners had voted Bing the greatest entertainer of their lifetime. Also on Radio Wales, **Beverley Humphreys** with her *ShowTime* programme on Saturday nights regularly plays Bing too.

Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** (www.bbc.co.uk/lincolnshire/local_radio/) Sunday afternoons' request show continues to feature Bing frequently and in fact the number of plays seems to be increasing nicely with tracks from Sepia CDs being used frequently. Many thanks, Howard.

Mike Carey at Radio Derby likes to play Bing regularly on his Sunday afternoon *Melodies with Mike Carey* programme. In recent weeks we have heard Bing, Peter Lorre, Kay Thompson and the Williams Brothers in the Psychiatrist's Office sketch from Philco Radio Time of November 12, 1947 and then "Getting to Know You" played as near as possible to the date of Bing's passing. Send Mike your requests through mike.carey@bbc.co.uk

New sounds have been emanating from Lincoln as **Lincoln City Radio**, a new community radio station, has been blasting out the classic music of seven decades up to 1980 on 103.6 FM and on the Internet at:

www.lincolncityradio.com/player.html .

There will be no current chart programmes as the station's licence granted by Ofcom is for music up to 1980 and an adult easy listening play list along with specialist programmes catering for Folk, Rock and Roll, Blues, Crooners and Guitar Instrumentals of the sixties. Our own **John Walton** is the Director of Programmes and he also acts as a presenter on occasion. On August 11, the station presented an hour of Bing using the *Swingin' with Bing* set. Lincoln City Radio suffered an unusual delay in its launch as it had planned to place its aerial on Lincoln Cathedral but Peregrine falcons were nesting there and the station had to wait until the birds left!

Australia

Graham Pascoe tells me that the ABC1 TV channel showed *Birth of the Blues* at 12.35 a.m. on 7 October. He didn't stay up to watch it! (He already had it on

DVD.) Two days later, the other national ABC TV channel (ABC2) screened *The Bells of St. Mary's*. Good to see Bing's films appearing more often in Australia.

On July 10, Sydney radio station 2CH (http://www.2ch.com/) broadcast an hour long special of Bing's music starting at 9 pm. Their advert referred to Bing as the "most popular entertainer" of the 20th Century. The tracks played were taken from Sepia's *Good & Rare* CDs with the exception of "True Love" and were:

1) Fatherly Advice 2) A Perfect Day 3) Back In The Old Routine 4) The Best Thing For You 5) Liza 6) Old Soldiers Never Die 7) What A Little Moonlight Can Do 8) In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening 9) Wouldn't It Be Funny 10) Milady 11) La Vie En Rose (French) 12) If There's Anybody Here 13) Cornbelt Symphony 14) This Could Be Forever 15) True Love

Every week 2CH has a regular Elvis hour and a Sinatra hour, but no Bing hour. The Bing special was a one-off but a number of Bing fans have requested that a Bing hour is now incorporated into their programme guide.

Ken Boness and Lance Gardam, on behalf of the Australian Bing Crosby Society, broadcast on Eastern FM 98.1 each Tuesday from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. Their programme is called "The Melody Lingers On with Bing Crosby & Friends" and can now be heard in many parts of Australia by satellite.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Michael Feinstein's American Songbook

The three part series which aired on PBS in the USA on October 6, 13, and 20 was a dynamic, documentary-style road trip and cultural primer, with Michael Feinstein as the leader of an expedition through the glorious history of American popular song. Viewers followed him both on stage and back stage, heard him interpret great standards, listened in on personal stories about the songwriters and entertainers he's known and worked with over three decades, and accompanied him on his quest to find and preserve the treasures of classic American popular music. Rare archival audio and film footage combined to reveal the social and historical forces behind the music that helped shape the style, attitude, and self-image of America for more than a century.

Michael made some nice comments about Bing and footage was shown of about half of the 1944 film performance of "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" from the *Swinging with the Stars* US Navy / Coast Guard short.

The web site for the show had some background comments from Michael.

> "I began collecting when I was five years old. My parents would take me to second-hand stores in Columbus, OH where I could buy old 78 records for a nickel apiece; and even though I could barely read the labels, I would take home as many as my weekly allowance could afford and savor them in my basement lair. Admittedly at that age I was hardly a connoisseur, but even then I loved the sounds of those old songs and was captivated by the emotions and ideas and even the vibrations that emanated so magically from that plain black disk. As I grew older and began making music myself I became increasingly curious about where it came from. Who wrote it? How was it notated and arranged and published and recorded? Who were the people who performed it, and what made them so great?"

He goes on to describe one particular acquisition.

> "In 1978 while doing research for Ira Gershwin on the RKO films for which the Gershwins had written scores, I stumbled upon a box of old lacquer disks in the RKO Warehouse. I asked the curator Jon Hall about them, and he told me that he was unaware of any such disks in the collection. It was a jumble of files and papers and not well organized. He told me that they had no interest in the recordings and had no desire to keep them. Rather than see them destroyed, I offered to make a tape transfer of the disks if he would give me the originals. Jon was happy to clear out some of the detritus in the warehouse and I departed with a hodgepodge of film-related disks from the 1940s. Some were audition records of film hopefuls, some were orchestral cues, and there were also two 12" glass base lacquer disks of Bing Crosby, one cracked beyond repair and the other not only playable but in miraculously good shape for its fragility. It had no label and simply said "Crosby - fluff" in grease pencil. Upon playing the side I was delighted by the rich sound of Crosby's voice–and also the comment he makes at the end. In *The Bells of Saint Mary's* he plays a pious man of the cloth. I wonder if he was wearing a priest's collar when he made this record?"

This was a recording of Bing singing "In the Land of Beginning Again" in rehearsal during the making of the film *The Bells of St. Mary's* in 1945. At the conclusion of the recording, Bing says "All right, 12 o'clock, everyone get their ass out."

I do hope the series will be shown in the UK. It is already being offered on DVD (with many extras) in the USA.

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died

since our last issue was prepared include:

Gloria Stuart, who starred in *Titanic* as the older version of Rose Calvert, died on September 27 aged 100. In her youth, Stuart was a blonde beauty who starred in B-movies as well as some higher-profile ones such as *The Invisible Man*, Busby Berkeley's *Gold Diggers of 1935* and two Shirley Temple movies, *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. But by the mid-1940s she had retired. She resumed acting in the 1970s, doing occasional television and film work but Stuart's later career would largely have remained a footnote if James Cameron had not chosen her for his 1997 epic about the doomed liner that struck an iceberg and sank on its maiden voyage in 1912. Stuart co-starred as Rose Calvert, the 101-year-old survivor played by Kate Winslet as a young woman. Both earned Oscar nominations, Winslet as best actress and Stuart as supporting actress. Cameron wanted an actress who was "still viable, not alcoholic, rheumatic or falling down," Stuart once said. Then in her mid-80s, Stuart endured hours in the makeup chair so she could look 15 years older, and she travelled to the Atlantic location, where the wreck of the real Titanic was photographed.

Titanic took in $1.8bn worldwide to become the biggest modern blockbuster, a position it held until Cameron's *Avatar* passed it on the box-office chart. It was the first time in Oscar history that two performers were nominated for playing the same character in the same film, and it made the 87-year-old Stuart the oldest acting nominee in history. Stuart was thought by many to be the sentimental favorite for the supporting-actress prize, but the award went to Kim Basinger for *L.A. Confidential*. Her connection with Bing? It was on June 30, 1938 that she appeared with him on the Kraft Music Hall to publicize her latest film which was *Island in the Sky*.

Ilene Woods, who died on July 1, aged 81, provided the speaking and singing voice for the title character in Walt Disney's classic 1950 animated feature *Cinderella*. She was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the daughter of "a backstage mom" who was responsible for Ilene getting her show biz start on the stage—at age two! At 14, during a vacation in New York City, she received an offer to top-line her own radio show once she became available at the end of that school year. "The Ilene Woods Show," a three-nights-a-week, 15-minute musical series, soon started its run on the Blue Network with the teenager as its star. Radio work on the Breakfast Club radio show hosted by Don McNeill in Chicago preceded a move to California for her first and only on-screen movie role (*On Stage Everybody* (1945)) and a stint on the Jack Carson-starring radio series "Sealtest Village Store." She also guested on Bing's Philco Radio Time broadcast on December 17, 1947. Her songwriter-friends Mack David and Jerry Livingston asked her, as a favor, to record two of their newest songs, not telling her that they were for the upcoming Disney animated feature *Cinderella* (1950). When Walt Disney heard her voice on the recordings, he chose her to voice that film's title role. At the time, Ms. Woods was unaware that more than 300 singers had auditioned to be the voice of Cinderella. Woods, married at age 17, had three children, a girl and two boys; when the third was born, she "re-cast" herself in the role of full-time wife and mother.

Margaret Lenhart passed away on July 27 at the age of 93. She was born in Renton, Washington on November 7, 1916 and became a singer on network radio after winning the "Gateway to Hollywood" contest in 1939. She had her own show on a Spokane radio station and in 1941 she became a featured soloist on the CBS radio show *Al Pearce & His Gang* which was sponsored by Camel Cigarettes. She also performed on a number of recordings and was the girl singer on Bing's recording of "I'll Capture Your Heart" with Fred Astaire. She appeared on the Kraft Music Hall of December 10, 1942 when she sang "Why Don't You Fall in Love with Me" with Bing.

Grace Bradley left us on September 21 on her 97th birthday. Not a name that will immediately strike a chord with many, she was a Paramount contract player in the 1930s and specialised in playing temptresses until she thought she was too old for that sort of role. Hence she retired from the screen at the age of thirty. The names of her characters in her two Crosby films give a good idea of the type of lady she was portraying. In *Too Much Harmony* (1933) she played Verne la Monte and for *Anything Goes* (1936) she was Bonnie La Tour. She was especially memorable in the latter film when her companion is the "Rev" Dr. Moon and her husband "Snake Eyes" Johnson is Public Enemy Number One. Martin McQuade struck up a telephone relationship with Grace in recent years and she told him:

Grace Bradley with Charles Ruggles and Bing in *Anything Goes* (1936)

"I had been considered for a role in the play, *Anything Goes*, so you can imagine my delight when Paramount assigned me a role in the film. Bing and I had worked together on *Too Much Harmony* so I was very happy to work with him again. I fell in love with his voice. Everyone on the set did. We all adored him."

During her career she co-starred opposite other such notable figures as Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour, Alice Faye, Bruce Cabot, William Bendix, Fred MacMurray, Harold Lloyd and W.C. Fields. In May 1937, Bradley went on a blind date and met Hopalong Cassidy star William Boyd and the two of them hit it off so well that they were married in June 1937. In the 1940s Bradley's star began to wane and in 1943 she had her last big role in *Taxi, Mister*. She spent the remainder of the 1940s alongside her beloved husband William Boyd travelling around the country with him helping to promote his cowboy image.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

A Reflection on Bing's Christmas Classics

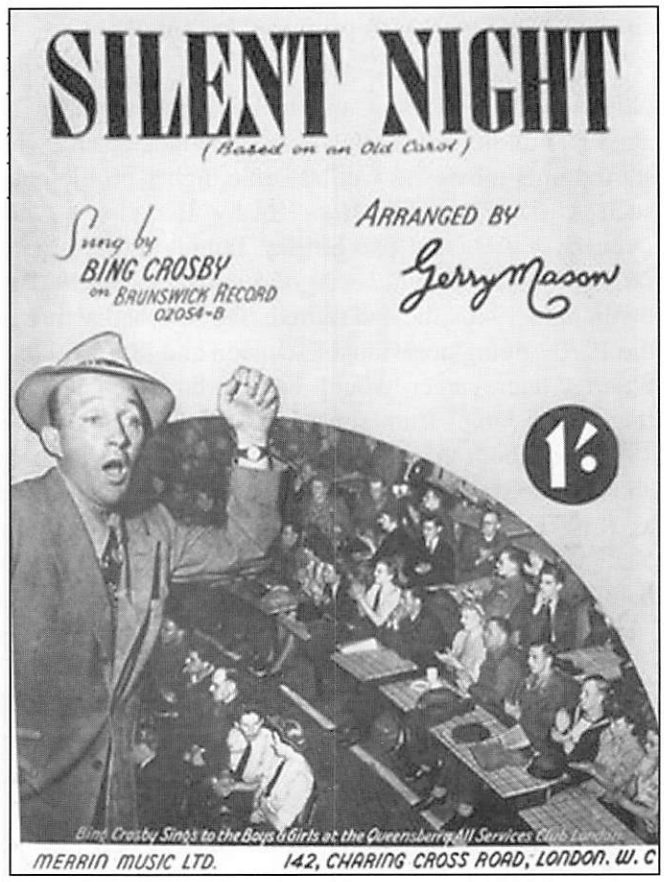
It was 33 years ago that a yuletide tradition ended with the last of Bing's annual Christmas radio and TV programs. His sudden death in October of 1977 on a golf course in Spain cast a bittersweet pall over an otherwise charming and jolly yuletide special.

During one of my three visits to Bing's Hillsboro home we talked extensively about Christmas and his close association with the season. That meeting took place on the evening of October 31, 1974. It was Halloween, but we were looking ahead to Christmas and reminiscing about family traditions.

Upon my arrival at the Crosby estate, I was surrounded by children in costumes, who were gathering at the entrance gates for "trick and treat goodies". I felt like I was suddenly cast in a Crosby movie, where so often Bing was accompanied by kids in a musical sequence. I almost expected them to break into song with a chorus or two of "Swinging on a Star".

After being greeted at the door by the Crosby's butler, Alan Fisher, who remembered me from previous visits, I met Bing in his den.

When we began our taped conversation that late fall evening we talked about his unique role in popularizing traditional Christmas carols. Prior to his1935 version of "Silent Night" being released, no popular singer had recorded a carol or sacred song. He not only crossed a musical boundary, but opened a studio door for the recording artists who followed him. When I met earlier with his brother and public relations director, Larry, he related the circumstances that led to Bing's decision to record Franz Gruber's ageless carol.



"There was a missionary from China," he told me, "who came to us with films of the activities of his mission church. He wanted to add a soundtrack and came to me. I said I would speak to Bing about financing a musical score for the movie, but I also suggested he (Bing) should also sing on the soundtrack, perhaps a carol like 'Silent Night'. The missionary thought it was a wonderful idea, but Bing was concerned that it might be out of his class. Nevertheless, he sang it on the soundtrack. I then told the priest that Bing would make a recording of 'Silent Night' and accompany it with another great carol, 'Adeste Fideles/O Come All Ye Faithful' and he would have something to sell when he asked people for donations. The profits from the sale of the record would then go to his mission."

When Bing heard excerpts from my interview with Larry and the reference to him being the first popular singer to record a sacred song, his reaction was somewhat surprising and modest. "It seems strange that no popular singer had recorded it before; I don't know if it's all that sacred. In Germany it is called 'Stille Nacht'. I guess you could call it a sacred song because of its mention of the virgin birth. I believe it was the first song of its kind to be recorded by a popular singer. But certainly many hymns were recorded by classical singers. It is true, Gord, that what you said about the profits from the sale of our recording going to Chinese missions."

Bing's original version became a collector's item when he re-recorded "Silent Night" in 1942 in his now familiar version.

During our pre-Christmas conversation, Bing also

reflected on the impact of his most identifiable song. "I certainly didn't think 'White Christmas' was going to be such a hit. I thought it was a very good score for *Holiday Inn*, there were some nice songs, "Abraham", songs like that – I really had no pre-conceived idea what would be the hit song. This one just stepped out because it was wartime, so many people were away from home, away from their families — boys in the service, navy, marines and the army and a song like that is reminiscent of home and family — and that's how it got kicked off I think."

While on his lengthy 1944 overseas tour of military bases, Bing couldn't do a show without bringing a little bit of home to the front lines with Irving Berlin's "White Christmas". "Well, it was always a kind of a wrench for me to sing the song", he told me, "I loved it of course, but at the camps and in the field hospitals, places where spirits weren't too high anyway, they would ask for the song – they'd demand it – and half the audience would be in tears. It was a rather sorrowing experience to have to sing it for these men and women when it made them feel sad. But I guess in retrospect that it was a glad kind of sadness."

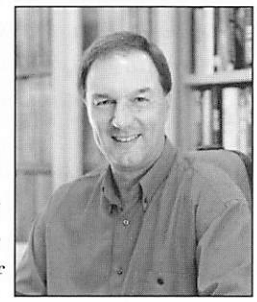
To paraphrase an appropriate quote from composer, arranger and producer, Sonny Burke: "No one perpetuated the magic, the mystique, the reverence and the gaiety of the yuletide like Bing." He was indeed the embodiment of the Christmas season. He lives on in our musical heritage and collective memories, for it is still not possible to think of Christmas without thinking of Bing.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: Gord's "A Crosby Christmas", Parts 1 and 2 are still available – see Trading Post.)

KEEPING TRACK

Ken Crossland looks at the new releases



Something of a pause for breath this time around! I'm sure that most readers are still enjoying the plethora of goodies that have come our way in 2010 and as Malcolm and Greg have already said, there is much more to come either side of the 2010 Festive Season. Reviews of those releases will appear here next time, but for the moment, let's limit ourselves to the autumn releases.

COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby – Through The Years Volume 6 Sepia 1158 UK £7.00 USA $12.50

1. You Are Too Beautiful 2. If There's Anybody Here 3. Back in the Old Routine (2 & 3 with Donald O'Connor) 4. Cornbelt Symphony 5. The Call of the South (4 & 5 with Gary Crosby) 6. I Love Paris 7. Secret Love 8. Stranger in Paradise 9. Vaya Con Dios 10. No Other Love 11. My Love, My Love 12. Young at Heart 13. (Oh! Baby Mine) I Get So Lonely 14. Liebchen 15. Tobermory Bay 16. Lost in Loveliness 17. The River 18. White Christmas 19. Snow (18 & 19 with Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee & Trudy Stevens) 20. The Old Man / Gee I Wish I Was Back in the Army (with Danny Kaye) 21. It Must Be True 22. Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams 23. Just One More Chance 24. Sweet and Lovely 25. Where the Blue of the Night 26. Paradise 27. Please 28. Just an Echo in the Valley 29. A Ghost of a Chance.

Volume 6 of this wonderful series that continues the chronological roll-out of Bing's commercial recordings, takes us from December 1953 to April 1954. As ever, this release brings together an eclectic bunch of recordings that includes two pairs of duets, some covers of early 50s hits by other artists, and some of the tracks from Bing's mammoth "Musical Autobiography" undertaking. The duets, two with Donald O'Connor and two with Gary are stand-out items, especially the latter. "Cornbelt Symphony" and "Call of the South" are probably the rarest of the father and son combinations that Bing did with Gary, but are as good as any that went before, especially "Call of the South" on which Bing sings a beautiful counterpoint of "Swanee River" behind Gary's vocal. The hits include a very strong version of "Stranger in Paradise" before the set moves on to cover the re-recordings of earlier hits that Bing did with the Buddy Cole trio for what became a 5-LP retrospective. How to handle this latter set of recordings has been a challenge for the compilers because the "story line" order of the issued set differs from the strict chronology of the recordings. Equally the recordings all featured a separately recorded spoken introduction

by Bing, so making chronological sense of all that not easy. The solution adopted has been to present the song recordings in chronological order, with the relevant spoken intro attached, edited occasionally where this new sequencing would not otherwise make sense. My personal preference would have been to have just the songs without the intros, but there will doubtless be strong voices in favour of this presentation. Sound quality is excellent, the booklet and notes highly informative and every member should buy one – at least one!

Once Upon A Mattress / Ali Baba And the Forty Thieves Sepia 1159 UK £7.00
Tracks 1-14 non Bing. 15. A long time ago in Persia (narration) 16. Year in, Year Out 17. Ali Baba always hoped (narration) / My Own Individual Star 18. 40 Thieves 40 (chorus) 19. Open Sesame 20. My Own Individual Star 21. Well now, Ali Baba's brother, Kassim (narration) 22. One Rich Brother 23. Open Sesame! Kassim was trapped! (narration) 24. One of Us is a Thief (Chorus) 25. I Love You Whoever You Are 26. One Rich Brother 27. They All Lived Happily Ever After
At first glance this is an odd pairing of albums for re-issue although the linking factor is that the music for both comes from Mary Rodgers, daughter of Richard. "Mattress" is the cast album from the London production, whilst "Ali Baba" is Bing's 1957 children's album, one of four similar LPs that he recorded at that time and which first saw light of day on the Golden label. The Crosby tracks are here as a makeweight and the Baba album runs to little over 20 minutes. They make their debut on CD here and those who must have everything will sound a cheer. Personally, I find myself wondering why Bing, at a time when his voice was in such good shape, wasted his time on this sort of material when there must have been so much else he could have done. Sound is crisp and clear, as per Sepia's usual standards and there is an informative 16-page booklet.

Aside from these two releases, everything else this time around has an "oh by the way feel" to it. First in that category is a 4-CD Judy Garland release on the UK JSP label called ***Judy Garland – The Lost Recordings 1929-1959*** *(£12.99 from Amazon UK). This set takes its name from the fact that it includes some hitherto unknown test recordings from the early days of Judy's life and career, but for us Crosbyphiles, the main interest comes from discs 2 and 3 which feature Judy on radio. There are Command Performance duets with Bing on "People Will Say We're in Love" and "Something to Remember You By", plus a Philco rehearsal take of "Connecticut". As well as Bing, the set features Judy with Hope, Jolson, Sinatra et al, plus of course, lots of solos.*

100 Hits Legends: Bing Crosby *is a UK 5-CD release that is almost given away at £5 for the set – or just £1 per CD. It's part of the Demon Music Group "100 Hits Legends" series which features many other artists such as Frank Sinatra, Andy Williams, Nat King Cole and Mario Lanza. The 100 tracks are indeed mostly hits, from the 30s to the 50s. Space precludes a listing, but write down the 100 Bing songs you would expect to see and you won't go far wrong. Of greater interest to me was the way Bing was described on HMV's web site in their promotion of this set:*

> It can be safely said that Bing Crosby taught America how to sing. Before his arrival in the 1930s, the airwaves were filled with off-pitch, rakish crooners and semi-operatic belters. It was Crosby who brought nuance to popular singing, popularising the crooning style that influenced everyone from Frank Sinatra to Nat "King" Cole.

Bing Crosby – The Voice of Christmas: *UK readers can now buy the compilation of Bing's American Decca recordings that hitherto was a US-only release at the budget price of £4.57 from Amazon UK, which truly is a great price for a terrific two-disc set.*

Finally in our CD trawl, a postscript to the "Seasons" CD that I reviewed last time. We were all thrilled to finally have this on CD but internet chat points out that the remastering has had two unwelcome consequences. The first is that Bing's voice has been moved off centre towards the left channel and the second is that the tracks have been "de-essed" to sharpen some of Bing's consonants, but with the undesirable consequence of flattening some of his vocal quality. Dig out your LP and play it in parallel with the CD, flicking between the two and you will see what the issues are.

DVD

The Legendary Bing Crosby Infinity Entertainment USA $15
This DVD is the commercial release of the compilation programme that was broadcast by PBS in the States earlier this year. In part, that show was part of the marketing effort from Bing Crosby Enterprises to promote the marvellous

series of releases that we have had this year, but it's very welcome now – especially for UK fans – to have that show available in its own right. Whereas the Television Specials releases have given us complete shows, the show on this DVD is more in the way of a tribute to Bing. Happily, it was put together in a thoroughly professional manner. It canters through Bing's television years from 1954 to 1977, with inputs from Kathryn, Mary, Michael Feinstein, Regis Philbin, Andy Williams and others, and includes full song excerpts from a variety of shows. There is much material here that we have become accustomed to seeing only in very poor quality before. Now, it's here and the quality overall is excellent, especially bearing in mind that some of this material exists only in the pre-videotape kinescope form. Highlights are the "three Bings" from the Bing Crosby Show of October 5, 1960, a 1964 duet with Hope on "I Believe In You" and Bing's 1968 link-up with Jose Feliciano on "Mama Don't Allow" – how wonderful to see a good quality, full colour clip from Bing's "Makin' Movies" 1968 special (and yes, we would like the whole show on a future release please!).

As well as the original PBS broadcast, this DVD release also includes around 30 minutes of bonus material. Some of this is footage of Michael Feinstein talking about various of Bing's songs, footage that clearly did not make the original edit. There are however some more gems – Bing & Maurice Chevalier duetting on "Alouette" from the one TV show they did together (again rarely seen), Bing and Dean Martin duetting in rocking chairs (from the 1958 Olds special) and Bing with three of his sons on "Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho'. All marvellous stuff and doubtless a DVD that will get played and played again.

That aside, the rest again is more of an "in passing" nature. There is a very handsome 7-DVD Sinatra box set available called the ***Frank Sinatra Concert Collection.*** *This set, jointly from Shout! Factory and Frank Sinatra Enterprises, pulls together the bulk of Sinatra's TV work in the 60s and 70s. Most of it has been available before on individual DVDs, so there is little new and that goes for the Crosby content too, which is a re-tread of the 1957 "Happy Holidays with Bing & Frank" show.* ***White Christmas*** *is now available in Blu-ray (the first Crosby release in that format!) for $19.99, providing you have the necessary equipment of course, and finally, Gary Giddins' biography of Bing,* ***A Pocketful of Dreams,*** *can now be downloaded onto an Amazon Kindle (e-book reader).*

Happy listening!

ken@kencrossland.co.uk **http://www.kencrossland.co.uk**

The Best-Selling Record of All

'White Christmas' and the reasons it endures

Roy Harris Jr. writing in the *Wall Street Journal* on December 5 last year tells us why.

It was a peaceful song that became a wartime classic. Its unorthodox, melancholy melody—and mere 54 words, expressing the simple yearning for a return to happier times—sounded instantly familiar when sung by America's favorite crooner. But 67 years after its introduction, some still are surprised to learn that Bing Crosby's recording of the Irving Berlin ballad "White Christmas" became not only the runaway smash-hit for the World War II holidays, but the best-selling record of all time.

Such unrivaled success reflects everything from record-industry trends to the sweep of global history. But it all begins with the songwriting genius of a Russian immigrant, born Israel Baline, who had just turned 54 when Decca recorded the track on May 29, 1942, and already had to his credit hundreds of hits like "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Blue Skies," "How Deep Is the Ocean?" and "God Bless America." (Berlin, 101 when he died in 1989, would have many more across a seven-decade career.)

Equally brilliant, though, was Berlin's insistence that "White Christmas" be introduced by the internationally popular Crosby. Perfectly suited to the casual, romantic style of the then-39-year-old, Berlin's lyric and tune blended the message, about longing for past Christmases, with suggestions of a love song, resonating with families being separated by war.

"'White Christmas' is an icon that transcends analysis for me. It has the simplicity that Berlin always tried to imbue his songs with," says Michael Feinstein, among the premier interpreters of the American Songbook. But Berlin's kind of simple is anything but to the ears of some music commentators.

"We know the song so well that we barely know it at all," Slate's Jody Rosen writes in his 2002 book "White Christmas: The Story of an American Song." Berlin biographer Philip Furia believes the songwriter's lack of formal musical training—he composed mostly on the black keys of F-sharp, often transposing songs with a specially modified piano—led to songs that "subtly depart from the most fundamental tenets of songwriting." While others might have stressed "dreaming" and "Christmas," for example, "Berlin deftly emphasizes the seemingly unimportant 'I'm' with a whole note, then races over the other syllables" before the next whole note, "white."

Rob Kapilow, playing as he is interviewed, notes how "White Christmas" eschews the usual "bridge": the

countervailing melody normally following a song's first 16 measures. Berlin's opening bars "take you up the scale of yearning in their chords," and repeating them immediately heightens the impact. "Hear the minor chords for 'listen' and 'glisten'?" asks Mr. Kapilow, known for his "What Makes It Great?" lecture series. "It's heartbreaking."

Exactly where and when Berlin composed "White Christmas" is a mystery, because he offered varying accounts. He wrote in his New York and Beverly Hills homes and in hotels, often depositing songs in what he called "the trunk" for later use. "White Christmas" started as escapist Depression-era fare—a mournful satire for a Broadway review. The song's introductory verse, expunged by Berlin from some early sheet music, and infrequently performed today, places the singer in "Beverly Hills, L.A.," "longing to be up North." (The verse, Mr. Feinstein notes, "weakens the impact by forcing the listener to interpret things in a certain way.")

Berlin finally pulled "White Christmas" from the trunk for the movie *Holiday Inn*, in which Crosby and Fred Astaire tell a story through a calendar full of songs. During production, though, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Crosby gave its first public performance—unheralded and unrecorded—on his Dec. 24, 1941, "Kraft Music Hall" radio program. The Decca 78 rpm wasn't released until just before the film's September premiere, as American recruits streamed overseas, many to snowless Pacific climes.

"Songs make history, and history makes songs," Berlin told an interviewer weeks before Decca's recording, suggesting that he expected good things for "White Christmas." (He once bragged that it was not only "the best song I ever wrote, it's the best song anybody ever wrote.") Still, he later conceded that the extent of its success shocked him. Irving Berlin Music Co., which collects royalties for his heirs, won't discuss totals. But a spokesman says he's "comfortable" saying that "Crosby's single is the best-selling record of all time." Guinness World Records puts its sales at more than 50 million copies, with album and other sales taking the total above 100 million.

Berlin had worried how *Holiday Inn* would showcase the song—reportedly hiding behind a set to observe Crosby singing it to co-star Marjorie Reynolds. He paid scant attention to orchestra leader John Scott Trotter's rendition with Crosby, backed by the Ken Darby Singers. In the 1940s, though, partly because of the war, radio broadcasting turned from live to recorded music. Disc jockeys, playing Crosby's "White Christmas" repeatedly, fueled demand for 78s to mail overseas.

Longing for Christmas snowfall was hardly a common image before Berlin's song. And Christmas carols, not secular songs, dominated the seasonal music scene. (After the success of "White Christmas," songwriters followed with similarly wistful hits, including "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.")

What had inspired Berlin? As a Jewish youth in Brooklyn, he experienced Christmas as an outsider, at neighbors' homes. Some biographers suggest that the death of his infant son, Irving Jr., from a heart ailment on Christmas Eve 1928 sharpened his sad holiday associations. But Berlin loved Christmastime, hating only how his film work often made for holidays away from his family back East. In 1937 a movie-industry friend surprised him with a short film designed to cheer him. Shot in advance, it pictured Berlin's family waving to him from a wintry home, as snow fell outside. Mr. Furia suspects that Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" also might have influenced him, since the poem and song both use "the simplest of rhymes and barest of imagery to evoke a beautiful but melancholy scene." Jody Rosen writes that Berlin owes a debt to the poignant American "Home Songs" of Stephen Foster.

Whatever Berlin's inspiration, Mr. Kapilow figures that the power of repetition in the war years laid the groundwork for its later success. Carl Sandburg may have explained that early popularity best in an article marking Pearl Harbor's first anniversary: "We have learned to be a little sad and a little lonesome, without being sickly about it. This feeling is caught in the song of a thousand juke boxes and the tune whistled in streets and homes, 'I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas.' When we sing that song we don't hate anybody. . . . Away down under, this latest hit of Irving Berlin catches us where we love peace."

Roy J. Harris Jr.

(Mr. Harris is a journalist and author in Hingham, Mass.)

Firm Favourites

Our own Ken Crossland was featured in the winter 2009 / 2010 edition of *Reflections*, the Price Waterhouse Cooper newsletter for former partners.

Ken Crossland {C&L/PwC, 1981-2002} has turned a lifelong fascination with popular music's crooners into a burgeoning career as a biographer.

One glance around Ken Crossland's study at home in Dorridge, near Solihull, and it easy to see that his passions lie in sport and music. Mementoes of Leeds United and golf line one side of the room, but it is the immaculately catalogued books, albums, CDs and photos of the great American crooners that fill all the other shelves and bookcases.

This vast store of information is evidence of no mere hobby - Ken has recently had his second book published, a biography of Perry Como. He spoke to *Reflections* about the new career he enjoys in tandem

with part-time consulting, about the eerie timing of personal visitations with Como and his great hero Bing Crosby.

Ken, where does your fascination with this musical genre come from?

Everyone asks that and I can't explain it. I didn't grow up listening to this kind of music because we didn't have a record player. However, I knew from a very early age that both mum and dad had been fans of Bing Crosby. There was a mystery to it that stemmed from that.

I loved Bing's voice and the music, but I also found the history side of it very interesting. As I started to learn more about it I realised the significance of Crosby being the first pop singer and the way the invention of the microphone, which allowed people to sing softly - to croon - with the notes formed in the back of the throat, plus advancements in electrical recording equipment and the rise of radio, came together to make Crosby a star.

As a young man I got into a network of collectors. It took on a much bigger scale than simply being a fan of this singer or that song. I used to edit the Crosby fan magazine and a friend (and Como co-author) Malcolm Macfarlane and I have helped sustain the Crosby Society for many years.

Did you ever meet the great man?

Yes, six days before he died. I was 23 at the time. He was appearing at the London Palladium after coming out of semi-retirement. Purely by chance, outside the Palladium I met the guy who at the time ran the UK Bing Crosby fan club. He had a big bottle of whiskey in his hand which he said he was going to try to present to Bing before the show, and he asked me if I'd like to come with him.

Before I knew it I was sitting on the sofa next to Bing in his dressing room. He thanked us for coming back stage, which I thought was terrific, and told us that after his next concert he was going to Spain to play some golf. A few days later he dropped dead on the golf course.

The night at the Palladium was the last opportunity I was ever going to get to meet Bing. It was as if somehow all the doors were opened for me in a completely unplanned way.

Tell us about your first published book, (cleverly) entitled *The Man Who Would Be Bing*

I actually wrote a book before that, which in a way set the ball rolling. It was called *Seats in the Stand* and was about the relationship between me, my father and football. My father died very suddenly in 1986 and the book represented an opportunity to revisit my relationship with him in the context of the time we had spent together watching Don Revie's great Leeds team. I was staggered when the first literary agent I approached signed me on. Unfortunately they couldn't get a deal with a publisher, but the agent said to me: "Look, you've written the book everyone has to get out of their system, now what are you going to go on to do?"

I'd always been intrigued by the career of Michael Holliday, who was a British clone of Bing Crosby. He had a real rags-to-riches career and was known for his supremely relaxed, wholesome style. In reality that was a front; everything about him was the opposite. He committed suicide in 1963 at the height of his fame and what fascinated me was that he has almost been written out of popular history. The book was well received and I got all sorts of interesting spin-offs. I produced a three-CD set for EMI to tie in with it, which in turn led to me writing sleeve-notes for them on all sorts of different artists. I was also the featured guest on Radio 2 and have done quite a lot of other radio work since then.

Given his fame and long-term success, your biography of Perry Como must have been a very different proposition to the Holliday work?

Believe it or not there had never been a biography of him. Como was very protective of his private life, and some publishers also felt it was a case of 'nice guy, no story'. What Malcolm and I wanted to do was explore that and bridge the gap between biography and reference, a category which the US publisher, McFarland & Company, specialises in.

Between 1948-1963 Como hosted 1,049 television shows. That's a staggering number. His timing was perfect: he made those 15 years his, then packed up three months before the Beatles arrived in the States and changed everything. He disappeared for several years, then somebody came up with the songs *And I Love You* So and *It's Impossible* and Como reinvented himself for another 20 years. I met him in Dublin in 1994 at what turned out to be his last show. He lived for seven more years but retired from performing and died from Alzheimer's.

Can you describe the process you adopt for writing, and the satisfaction you get from the finished product?

In the case of the Como book, Malcolm researched it and I wrote it. Frankly I did enough trotting in and out of hotels in my PwC career, so it was Malcolm who went to the US to do the interviews.

It's only when you get into the writing that the ideas emerge about how you want to shape it. My target is to write 2,500 words of publishable standard copy on a writing day. Some days I'm there by lunch time. Others, it's a real slog. The Como book was tough because we had 60 years-worth of data to assimilate, but I love the challenge. There are certain stylistic things a writer does and when they see a review which hits on that you get a real kick. I like to write with pace and someone commented on this in a review. With the Holliday book, several people said they stayed up all night to read it.

"That's the kind of reaction you're after."

Ben Sharratt

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